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THE HIPPOLYTUS LEGEND IN DRAMAS
(from Classical Greek to Modern American)

by

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Introduction

A great admirer of Euripides, I have read and reread his Hippolytus which is my favorite of his dramas. Knowing that other dramatists had also employed the theme, I was desirous to learn how their work compared with that of the famous Greek tragic poet. Consequently I made this study of the available dramas based on the legend.

Those available to me were: the Greek of Euripides (428 B.C.), the Latin of Seneca (56 A.D.), the French of Racine (1677), the English of Edmund Smith (1707), the early American of Julia Ward Howe (1851), and the modern American of Hilda Doolittle (1927). In various ages and nations, authors realizing the great dramatic possibilities in the theme, have used it for the plot of their plays.

"The plot is a variant of a very old theme found in ancient Egypt and in the Pentateuch. Theseus, not here the ideal democrat on the Athenian throne, but the stormy and adventurous hero of the poets, had early in life conquered the Amazons and ravished their virgin Queen. She died, leaving a son like herself, Hippolytus. Theseus some twenty years after married Phaedra, the young daughter of Minos, King of Crete, and she by the evil will of Aphrodite fell in love with Hippolytus. She told no one her love, and was trying to starve herself to death, when her old nurse contrived to worm the secret from her and treacherously, under an oath of secrecy, told it to Hippolytus. Phaedra, furious with the nurse and with Hippolytus, in a blind rage of self-defence, writes a false accusation against Hippolytus and hangs herself. Hippolytus, charged by Theseus with the crime, will not break his oath and goes out to exile under his father's curse. The gods, in fulfilment of the curse, send death to him, but before

he actually dies reveal his innocence."¹

Each author has treated the plot differently, and I have endeavored to show how national characteristics of literature of his time have influenced his work.

¹Gilbert Murray, Euripides and His Age, pp. 84-85.

CHAPTER I

The Hippolytus of Euripides, 428 B.C.

The spirit of the Greek drama was pre-eminently religious. Its intimate connection with the supernatural constituted one of its essential elements. The theatrical representations at Athens in Euripides' age were constituent parts of a great religious celebration. So tradition and dramatic propriety compelled him to take his themes from myths and heroic legends. In The Hippolytus, very often considered his greatest play, Euripides used the old Attic legend of Phaedra as handed down through the ages as the theme of his great drama.

He follows the three unities of Greek drama, has very few characters, and a simple plot. His form is the traditional stiff metrical, using iambic trimeter. His style is clear, direct, and sincere, telling the story in extreme simplicity which intensifies the drama. The language used is that which educated people used in Euripides' day, the 5th century B.C.² There is much beautiful poetry in his work, such as the outburst of the chorus describing the region to the west:

²William Nickerson Bates, Euripides, A Student of Human Nature, p. 41.

"Could I take me to some cavern for mine hiding,
 In the hill-tops where the Sun scarce hath trod;
 Or a cloud make the home of mind abiding,
 As a bird among the bird-droves of God!
 Could I wing me to my rest amid the roar
 Of the deep Adriatic on the shore,
 Where the water of Eridanus is clear,
 And Phaethon's sad sisters by his grave
 Weep into the river, and each tear
 Gleams, a drop of amber, in the wave.
 To the strand of the Daughters of the Sunset,
 The Apple-tree, the singing and the gold;
 Where the mariner must stay him from his onset,
 And the red wave is tranquil as of old;
 Yea, beyond that pillar of the End
 That Atlas guardeth, would I wend;
 Where a voice of living waters never ceaseth
 In God's quiet garden by the sea,
 And Earth, the ancient life-giver, increaseth
 Joy among the meadows, like a tree.

O shallop of Crete, whose milk-white wing
 Through the swell and the storm-beating,
 Bore us thy Prince's daughter,
 Was it well she came from a joyous home
 To a far King's bridal across the foam?
 What joy hath her bridal brought her?
 Sure some spell upon either hand
 Flew with thee from the Cretan strand,
 Seeking Athena's tower divine;
 And there, where Munychus fronts the brine,
 Crept by the shore-flung cable's line,
 The curse from the Cretan water!"³

In this play we find many evidences of the supernatural which constitutes an essential element of Greek drama. The goddess Aphrodite delivers the prologue. Artemis appears as if on a cloud by means of the "Deus ex Machina", a typical device of the Greek theatre by which a god or other character was introduced on high by means of a mechanical contrivance. The various characters address the gods in prayer and Hippolytus offers garlands of flowers to Artemis. Throughout

³Murray, op. cit., pp. 39-40.

the play we find the Greek idea of human fate destined by the gods. Phaedra and Hippolytus are the targets of an Olympian quarrel between Aphrodite and Artemis, and both helpless victims of Moira.

The chorus, another characteristic element of the Greek theatre, was utilized by Euripides with skill and ingenuity. The chorus is an integral part of the play as it is cognizant of everything which takes place in the action of the drama. Sometimes the chorus is supplementary as the huntsmen with Hippolytus. Much beautiful poetry is uttered by Euripides' chorus. He was aware of the dramatic possibilities of the chorus and usually had a pure poetic outburst of the chorus follow a particularly tragic scene to lessen the dramatic tension.

Euripides' Hippolytus is a character play in which the whole interest is centered on a study of very few personages. Hippolytus is the most important, but not the most tragic character. He is frank, manly, and devoted to outdoor sports with his mind occupied by thoughts of hunting. We admire the honest, clean-living, clean-thinking youth. He possesses a deep sense of honor to keep his oath, even though keeping it brings him the hatred of his beloved father and exile from his home.

Phaedra is the real tragic character of the drama. Early in the play we find her in the grip of a passion she cannot control. We admire her for endeavoring to repress the passion, and it is only by repeated questions that her nurse

plys her secret from her. Even then Phaedra insists that the nurse keep it a secret. She knows right from wrong and tries to do the right, but the power of Aphrodite is too great for her. When she learns that her nurse has revealed her secret passion, she is overwhelmed by shame and anger. At the same time she is afraid, for she knows that Theseus will learn the truth; and she is angry with Hippolytus for his scorn of her. Her letter is written partly to secure revenge and partly to defend herself by making Theseus think her innocent. Her passion may have been caused by the gods, but her own evilness produced the note condemning the innocent Hippolytus, making us hate the weak, evil woman.

Theseus is distinctly secondary with no particularly outstanding qualities. He sacrifices the life of his beloved son without investigating the letter which accuses him. When the truth unfolds his self reproaches are of no avail. In his misfortunes he is tragic.

The nurse is the type of devoted servant who makes the interests of her mistress of first importance. When she learns the true cause of her mistress' illness, she is horrified but she puts aside her scruples and does what she knows to be wrong in order to gratify her mistress and save her regardless of what might happen to herself.

Euripides' stage directions are similar to those given by other Greek authors of his age. The stage itself was devoid of decoration, the same background being used for

almost all scenes. Modern scenery, realistic in the minutest detail, was unknown to the Greeks. Supplying environmental scenery was left solely to the imagination of the audience. As in other Greek plays, Euripides merely states where the scene is laid, the location of the entrances, and the position of statues. He notes the entres and exits of characters, describing in very dramatic parts the emotions of a character as "downcast, sobbing, calmly", etc. The play is not littered with stage directions as we find in modern plays. However, the potency of the human drama in his clear lines make extra directions unnecessary to a good actor. The stage directions are complete and sufficient for an actor with imagination and stage knowledge.

The scene opens before the royal castle of Trozén with a prologue by the goddess Aphrodite. As in many of his dramas, to deliver the prologue Euripides here employs a person who does not again appear in the drama. The goddess, although detached from the play, plays an important part as a divinity whose displeasure brings disaster to the hero, Hippolytus.

In Greek drama the prologue was very useful in presenting an explanatory introduction and background necessary for an understanding of the play by the audience to whom no programs or play bills were distributed. In this prologue Aphrodite reveals the rivalry between herself and Artemis. Since Hippolytus spurns her spell and spends his days in

hymns of praise and worship of her hated adversary, Artemis, she sets forth her jealous determination to bring catastrophe to Artemis' favorite. She tells us that by the working of her will Phaedra has been smitten with love for her stepson. Then she informs us of the fate of the two main characters when she says:

"And she, not in dishonour, yet shall die.
I would not rate this woman's pain so high
As not to pay mine haters in full fee
That vengeance that shall make all well with me.

But soft, here comes he, striding from the chase,
Our Prince Hippolytus! - I will go my ways. -
And hunters at his heels: and a loud throng
Glorying Artemis with praise and song!
Little he knows that Hell's gates opened are,
And this his last look on the great Day-star!"⁴

Although she discloses that Hippolytus will be slain by his father, Theseus, through the three curses which Poseidon gave to his son, Theseus, she does not divulge the manner of our hero's death. Again, in predicting Phaedra's fate, she does not disclose how she will meet it. After delivering the prologue Aphrodite withdraws as Hippolytus and his retinue of huntsmen, the Greek supplementary chorus, enter singing a hymn of praise to Artemis.

Hippolytus then garlands the statue of Artemis with a wreath as he pledges fidelity to her. An old huntsman from the group steps out to warn Hippolytus that he should also worship Aphrodite. However, Hippolytus reaffirms his

⁴Gilbert Murray, The Hippolytus of Euripides, p. 5.

preference for Artemis, lightly rejecting the huntsman's advice. Upon Hippolytus' invitation, the huntsmen depart with him for a merry feast in the castle.

A chorus of about fifteen Trozenian women enter deploring the illness of Queen Phaedra and questioning a clue to her malady. The Queen's nurse comes out of the castle followed by Phaedra supported by two handmaids who prepare a couch for her to lie upon. The nurse grieves over her beloved Phaedra's fevered pain. Phaedra reveals her despair when she says:

"What have I said? Woe's me! And where
 Gone straying from my wholesome mind?
 What? Did I fall in some god's snare?
 --Nurse, veil my head again, and blind
 Mine eyes. -- There is a tear behind
 That lash. -- Oh, I am sick with shame!
 Aye, but it hath a sting,
 To come to reason; yet the name
 Of madness is an awful thing. --
 Could I but die in one swift flame
 Unthinking, unknowing!"⁵

The leader of the chorus questions the nurse as to the cause of Phaedra's strange illness. To this the nurse replies that Phaedra had fasted completely for the past three days, and that Theseus, who has been on a journey, does not know of it. Murray says that "perhaps there was a definite tradition saying where he had gone and why, but if so, it is lost."⁶

⁵Ibid., p. 14.

⁶Ibid., p. 79, note p. 16.

The nurse persists in questioning Phaedra until the latter distraughtly confesses her love for Hippolytus. In a beautiful passage she pours out her soul as it were, to describe how the love descended upon her, driving her to madness. When she could not overcome her passion or drive it from her mind, she chose to die rather than to bring shame to her husband and children.

"Friends, 'tis for this I die; lest I stand there
Having shamed my husband and the babes I bare.
In ancient Athens they shall some day dwell,
My babes, free men, free-spoken, honourable,
And when one asks their mother, proud of me!
For, oh, it crows a man, though bold he be,
To know a mother's or a father's sin.

'Tis written, one way is there, one, to win
This life's race, could man keep it from his birth,
A true clean spirit. And through all this earth
To every false man, that hour comes apace
When time holds up a mirror to his face,
And girl-like, marvelling, there he stares to see
How foul his heart! Be it not so with me!"⁷

Recovering from the shock of Phaedra's admission, the nurse replies that it is the will of the goddess Aphrodite, who, "when in might she swoops, no strength can stem."⁸ She advises Phaedra not to seek death, but to yield to her love as many others have done, since it is futile to resist the will of the gods. Phaedra tells her that she should be ashamed to have uttered such foul advice, and to banish forever such words and thoughts.

The nurse enters the castle to prepare a magic charm

⁷Ibid., pp. 24-25.

⁸Ibid., p. 25, line 20.

with which to cure Phaedra of her love. While inside the nurse informs Hippolytus of Phaedra's love for him, under oath that he will not betray the awful truth. The incensed youth, repulsed and horrified, declares his disdain and disgust as he enters, following the nurse. After swearing to keep his oath not to reveal the nurse's secret when Theseus returns, he departs in fury.

After the bitter departure of Hippolytus, Phaedra berates the nurse, curses her for revealing the secret, and irately sends her into the castle. Phaedra makes the witness chorus swear to keep the revelations under oath, and enters the castle musing upon how she will take her life to save her name and her sons from dishonor.

The previous scene was so tragic that the only thing that can lessen the tenseness without losing the mood is an outburst of beautiful poetry by the chorus describing the region to the west, expressing the desire to escape to that Utopian realm, if not of happiness, at least of beautiful sadness.

From the beauty of the poetry of the chorus, we are aroused by voices and women crying from within the palace that Phaedra has hung herself. As the women lament that the Queen is dead, Theseus enters wearing sacrificial clothing and carrying a garland which may indicate that he has returned from a visit to some oracle or shrine. When the women inform him that Phaedra is dead, he is deeply anguished

and requests to see the bitter sight. The great central door of the castle is thrown wide open to reveal the body of Phaedra lying on a bier, surrounded by a group of wailing handmaids. Euripides made use of the *eccyclema*, a platform on wheels, which was pushed out from the stage buildings to show an interior scene, to display the body of Phaedra.

Theseus grieves over the death of his beloved wife until he notices a tablet with writing sealed by her gold signet, fastened to her wrist. Upon reading the tablet he, in uncontrollable rage, reveals its contents to his people that: "Hippolytus by violence hath laid hand On this my wife, forgetting God's great eye."⁹

In a fury he calls upon his father, Poseidon, who had granted him three wishes, to grant him one of those wishes by slaying his son Hippolytus that day. When the Leader of the Chorus asks Theseus to retract the awful wish, he refuses, and adds that he will exile Hippolytus.

When Hippolytus enters, Theseus berates him as he charges him with the dishonor and murder of his wife. On the false accusation Theseus banishes him from Athens and all of his realms forever. Hippolytus, professing his innocence, denies the false charge and takes an oath that God may strike him down if he is guilty. However, his father and the crowd remain unmoved by his pleadings. Theseus refuses to listen to him and orders him to depart as he enters the castle.

⁹Ibid., p. 47.

Hippolytus breaks out in a final prayer before the statue of Artemis as he sorrowfully leaves with his huntsmen and friends.

Throughout this scene Hippolytus has been noble in keeping his oath to the nurse and not revealing the truth. He only appeals to his known character and passionately pleads against all the inferences that his father has drawn to the general hypocrisy. The chorus, also under oath, are barred from announcing the truth.

The climactic scene is calmed by a chorus of men and women who lament the fate of Hippolytus. A Henchman enters in haste with a message for Theseus who enters from the castle. The Henchman relates, how, as they accompanied Hippolytus who was driving his chariot along the shore, a gigantic wave in whose crest was a huge wild Sea-Bull rose out of the sea as if to engulf the chariot. As Hippolytus attempted to control his frightened steeds, the wave and Bull arose again, terrifying the four horses so that they went mad. In blind rage they raced toward a rocky section until one wheel of the chariot caught upon the rocks, upsetting the chariot. Wildly, the coursers dragged Hippolytus, entangled in the reins, over sharp rocks, battering his head and tearing his flesh. Finally he became loose from the tangled rein and lay mangled, close to death, upon the shore when his friends reached him. The Henchman heatedly declares his belief in the innocence of

Hippolytus as he petitions Theseus to listen to the last words of his dying son. Theseus reluctantly consents as the Henchman departs to bring the dying Hippolytus to his father.

Again, to lessen the tenseness of the scene, the chorus chants a lyric of the power of Aphrodite. At the close of their song, Artemis approaches on a cloud (*deus ex machina*) and bades Theseus to listen to her. She proclaims that she has come to prove the purity and honor of Hippolytus. She tells how Aphrodite

"sent her fire to run
In Phaedra's veins, so that she loved thy son.
Yet strove she long with love, and in the stress
Fell not, till by her nurse's craftiness
Betrayed, who stole, with oaths of secrecy,
To entreat thy son. And he, most righteously,
Nor did her will, nor, when thy railing scorn
Beat on him, broke the oath that he had sworn,
For God's sake. And thy Phaedra, panic-eyed,
Wrote a false writ, and slew thy son, and died,
Lying; but thou wast nimble to believe!"¹⁰

Dumbfounded and remorseful, Theseus utters a deep groan as the goddess berates him for being so hasty to invoke Poseidon's curse so unjustly upon his own son without waiting to investigate the charges. When Theseus says that he wishes to die, Artemis replies that, although he has committed an unforgiveable crime, there is forgiveness for him since it was the will of the goddess Aphrodite. Since Zeus had ordained in heaven that no god could interfere with the will of another, she, Artemis, could not hinder the will of

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 67.

Aphrodite.

Attendants enter carrying Hippolytus whose torn flesh and blood-stained hair corroborate the Henchman's story. In anguish the dying youth reaffirms his innocence and prays for the soothing relief of death to loose him from his agony. He is comforted when Artemis speaks to him, telling him that his own nobleness caused his death and that she would weep for him, if gods could weep, since her love for him will last forever. She relates how Aphrodite, jealous for his worship and allegiance, while simultaneously despising his chastity, had ordained his death.

Sorrowful Theseus regrets his curse and expresses his wish to die in his son's place. Artemis declares that she will have her revenge upon Aphrodite and reveals how Hippolytus will be honored after his death:

"Honours most high in Trozên will I make;
For yokeless maids before their bridal night
Shall shear for thee their tresses; and a rite
Of honouring tears be thine in ceaseless store;
And virgins' thoughts in music evermore
Turn toward thee, and praise thee in the Song
Of Phaedra's far-famed love and thy great wrong."¹¹

Declaring that she must leave because a goddess may not witness a mortal's death, she bids Theseus to clasp his son, admonishing mutual forgiveness with their reconciliation. Hippolytus forgives his father, telling him that he is not guilty of slaying his son, since it was Aphrodite's will. In

¹¹Ibid., pp. 72-73.

a fond and touching farewell Theseus passionately embraces his dying son until Hippolytus asks his father to lay the mantle over his face. As Hippolytus breathes his last, his grief-stricken father complies with his request. As the chorus carry the body of Hippolytus into the castle, they sing of the bitter grief and tears of a nation at the loss of great men.

CHAPTER II

Phaedra or Hippolytus of Seneca

F. L. Lucas summarizes the influences of Seneca's literary age:

"In general, an ever more cosmopolitan Rome provincialised the best classical style, the almost tyrannical tradition of the Augustans made writers who conformed to its ultra-classic and those who rebelled more dramatically romantic, the political stagnation of autocracy forced authors and public alike to become dilettante and academic, craving to feed their jaded appetites on fustian rhetoric and orgies of epigram; next, in drama in particular, the substitution of recited for acted plays developed more and more the purple patch, the mere tawdry brilliance of language, the habit of kicking an audience awake with horror piled on horror, while true dramatic effect and characterisation were neglected; lastly, in Seneca himself, Stoicism induced an egotistic hardness, a wooden uniformity in his characters, and a substitution of hysterical sentiment for emotion, which removes him whole worlds from his master Euripides."¹²

There was little national life in Rome at the time and no national drama. Like other authors of his day, Seneca reverted to Greek models and imitated them closely. Although Greek drama was originated for religious observances, even by Euripides time we find a greater influence on art than on religion. Due to the literary standards of his time Seneca subordinates everything to art. Euripides presented Phaedra's passion as divine fate beyond her control. Seneca

¹² Lucas, F. L., Seneca and Elizabethan Tragedy, p. 59.

reduces this love to its human elements and disregards the idea of fate. Although he propounds philosophic fatalism in the chorus and in dialogue, he subordinates it in his character portrayal where he evidences free will.

In Seneca's time attention which went far in absorbing other interests was given to the study of rhetoric. Instruction in grammar and style which conformed to the Ciceronian standard of diction was an essential part of a youth's education. In Seneca's drama the forensic contest between the nurse and Hippolytus is a typical speech following models in rhetorical schools. We find rhetorical ornamentation in Phaedra's speech at the death of Hippolytus. The demands of his public and his own training explain the numerous rhetorical devices used by Seneca in his drama: descriptions, enumerations, similes, epigrams, synecdoches, and figure of thought and expression.

The form of Seneca's tragedy is classic, adhering to the unities of time, place, and action. There is no counter-plot and the story is depicted simply as in Euripides' version. Like all Roman drama, it is a direct model of the Greek drama. Since it is such a close imitation of the Greek, the author gives us nothing of Italy, either in setting or history.

The play lacks the simplicity and constructive power of great drama which we find in Euripides' play because of the extremely long, didactic speeches and elaborate monologues.

The lengthy descriptions in florid, rhetorical style make the drama more of the closet type than one to be acted. The play does not seem to have been written for the stage and I can find no evidence that it was ever acted. The dullness of the extremely long speeches is lessened by epigrams, beautiful poetry, and frequent flights to philosophy. The tendency to philosophize is characteristic of Seneca; the florid, rhetorical style is characteristic of the age of Nero in which Seneca wrote his play. In this age form and rhetorical devices were magnified unduly. However the qualities do not contribute to dramatic appeal.

Whereas Euripides' drama is naturally divided into episodes usually marked by the entrance and exit of the chorus, Seneca has divided his play into five formal acts. Unlike the Greek, the chorus in the Roman drama adds little to the plot, often chanting a lengthy song with little or no bearing on the immediate incidents of the play. I find a weakness and an improbability in the structure of Seneca's tragedy in Act I in the scene between Phaedra and the nurse when the latter questions the queen for the motive of her grief. No entrance of the chorus has been noted. Yet, at the end of the act, the chorus reveal, in a speech of eighty-three lines, that they have witnessed the scene.

In Seneca's drama neither Phaedra nor the nurse binds the chorus to secrecy under oath. Why then, when innocent Hippolytus is falsely charged by Phaedra with having

committed a crime, do they not reveal the truth to allow justice to triumph? In Euripides' version, Phaedra binds the chorus to secrecy by oath which makes their subsequent silence at the crucial moment logical since the oath carried so great importance in Greek life.

Seneca follows the traditional story used by Euripides except for the following deviations:

At the opening of the plays Theseus is absent. Euripides' Theseus has been gone for a matter of days on a mission of which nature we are not informed. He returns wearing a garland so he may have been on a pilgrimage to a shrine or oracle. Seneca's Theseus has deserted Phaedra for four years to go to Dis to capture Pluto's queen with his friend, Pirithoüs.

In Euripides' version, Theseus returns from his mission to discover that his wife has hung herself. In Seneca's version, Theseus returns to find his wife lamenting over the loss of her honor which she claims Hippolytus betrayed.

Euripides enters the goddess Artemis in the prologue to explain the subsequent action. When Hippolytus is fatally wounded, he has Artemis re-enter to comfort the innocent dying youth and to inform Theseus of the true facts of the case. Seneca dispenses with the prologue and has Phaedra confess the truth to Theseus after he has had his son slain.

Euripides has Phaedra hang herself before Theseus returns, after Hippolytus scorns her. Seneca has Phaedra

fall on a sword after confessing to Theseus.

In Seneca there is no reconciliation between father and son, as we find in Euripides, since Hippolytus is dead when his mangled remains are returned to Theseus.

The manner of Hippolytus' death in Seneca's drama is identical with that in Euripides except that the former lengthily describes the nature of the sea monster.

The only admirable character in the drama of Seneca is Hippolytus, the honest, chaste youth who is sent to his death by his father for a crime he did not commit. When Phaedra suggests that he take over the rule of Athens since his father has not returned, he refuses because he believes his father will come back. When Phaedra offers herself to him, he repulses her and berates her scorchingly for betraying her husband and children.

Euripides' drama is much more subtle when he has the nurse reveal Phaedra's passion to Hippolytus. Seneca makes Phaedra positively despicable when she offers herself to him, and kneeling before him, embrace his knees, begging him to satisfy her passion. The only honorable act of Phaedra's in the play is her confession to Theseus that Hippolytus is innocent. Euripides' Phaedra seems much more a victim of fate, controlled by the gods.

Theseus in Seneca's play does not receive our sympathy when we learn from the beginning that he has forced Phaedra to live in wedlock with him against her will. He has been

gone for four years, deserting Phaedra, to Dis with a friend to capture and seduce Pluto's queen. For a man with such ethics we find his tragedy deserving.

As in Euripides' play, the nurse is the typical devoted servant who will do anything for her mistress, regardless of the consequences to herself. We admire her when she moralizes to Phaedra and begs her to drive the wicked passion from her breast. She is loyal to her mistress when she tries to save her by inculpating Hippolytus. However we do not respect loyalty which interferes with justice.

Seneca gives fewer stage directions than Euripides, with none at all for the emotions of the actors. He notes entrances and exits of the characters and marks parts where Phaedra faints, falls on the sword, etc. The meager stage directions also classify the play as a closet drama.

The influence of Greek drama was so great that Roman drama was, for the most part, a wholesale imitation of the Greek dramas, frequently nothing more than a translation of the latter. The Romans seemed to have followed the lines of least resistance by imitating Greek models rather than creating their own. Thus we find Seneca imitating Euripides in his version of the Hippolytus legend in which he most often employed anapestic measure. Seneca entitled his drama "Phaedra or Hippolytus".

In an introduction we are informed that Theseus has descended into Dis and has been absent for four years in a

venture with his friend to capture Pluto's queen. We also learn that Venus has cursed Phaedra with a strange madness in the form of her passion for Hippolytus. Seneca does not reveal the future catastrophe and death to the main characters as Euripides does in his prologue.

The drama opens with the entrance of Hippolytus in hunting costume with his huntsmen. In a very long, rambling speech he assigns places for the hunt as he gives detailed directions to his men and their servants. He closes his speech with an elaborate praise to his patroness Diana, as goddess of the chase, to bring success to their hunt, as he departs.

At this point in the Greek drama, Euripides introduced the chorus to reveal Phaedra's illness. Although Seneca does not introduce them at this time, we learn at the end of the scene that they have witnessed the interview between the nurse and Phaedra. Phaedra enters with her nurse, and in a long speech bewails her lot because she has been forced to leave her native home of Crete and marry her father's enemy, Theseus. She relates how Theseus has deserted her and recalls her mother's unhappy passion. Finally she reveals the unlawful passion within her own heart which preys upon her soul from Venus' hate of her family. Although she does not name the object of her passion, from her references to hunting and forest glades, it is implied that her step-son Hippolytus is the target.

The nurse urges Phaedra to quickly destroy the passion as sinful love has already brought disaster to her family. We find a good example of Seneca's philosophy as the nurse utters:

"Who e'er too much enjoys
The smiles of fortune and in ease is lapped,
Is ever seeking unaccustomed joys.
Then that dire comrade of a high estate,
Inordinate desire, comes in. The feast
Of yesterday no longer pleases; now
A home of sane and simple living, food
Of humble sort, are odious. Oh, why
Does this destructive pest so rarely come
To lowly homes, but chooses rather homes
Of luxury? And why does modest love
Beneath the humble roof abide, and bless
With wholesome intercourse the common throng?
Why do the poor restrain their appetites,
Whereas the rich, on empire propped, desire
More than is right. Who wields too much of power
Desires to gain what is beyond his power."¹³

The nurse argues that Phaedra's love is hopeless since Hippolytus is such a woman-hater. Phaedra resolves upon death as her only refuge to save her honor. The nurse begs her not to seek death and announces

"Mine be the task to approach the savage youth,
And bend his will relentless to our own."¹⁴

The chorus sings at length of the powerful passion and irresistible force of love.

The second act opens with the chorus questioning the nurse as to Phaedra's condition. The nurse replies that the flames of love so sear the Queen's soul that she is nervous

¹³Frank Justus Miller, The Tragedies of Seneca, pp. 175-176.

¹⁴Ibid., p. 178.

and distraught from lack of food and sleep. The palace doors open revealing Phaedra reclining upon a couch. She refuses to wear her royal robes and gems, preferring to dress as a huntress, and go on the chase as Hippolytus' mother did. The chorus urges her to stop lamenting and live a normal life, implying that she yield to Venus' will which is so powerful and necessary for the propagation of the race.

At this moment Hippolytus enters to deliver a long monologue on the blissful freedom and happiness of the chase and the sanctuary the forest provides. He harangues against all women, declaring that he hates them all as they are the cause of all evil. The nurse argues that the pleasures of life should be enjoyed with a free rein to youth. He replies that his life in the woods is joy enough for him and frees him from the cares of life among men. He compares his woodland life to the Golden Age and traces the gradual fall from the innocence of that time to the abandoned sin and war of the present. He concludes by laying the blame for this degeneration upon women.

Phaedra enters, and upon seeing Hippolytus, falls fainting. When Hippolytus picks her up in his arms, she recovers and laments that she is back to the world of her griefs again. When Hippolytus asks the reason for her grief, she answers that she would tell him if they were alone. Hippolytus assures her that they are alone and again

questions the cause of her grief. After hesitating Phaedra reveals her love for him and begs him to pity her. With scorn and horror he repulses her and draws his sword to kill her. Phaedra urges him to kill her so that she may die by his hands and perish before she sins. However, he decides not to defile his sword by her touch as he casts it upon the ground and rushes into the forest.

While Phaedra seems to have another fainting spell, the nurse plans to blame Hippolytus for her mistress' guilty love. Loudly she calls for help claiming that Hippolytus attacked the Queen and threatened her with death. Showing his sword as evidence, she tells the attendants of his hasty departure to the forest.

The second act closes with a long chant of one hundred lines by the chorus praising the beauty of Hippolytus and dwelling upon the mischief caused by beauty which is so fleeting. There is great beauty in the lines:

"Ah, beauty, a doubtful boon art thou,
The gift of a fleeting hour! How swift
On flying feet thou glidest away!
So flowery meadows of the spring
The summer's burning heat devours,
When midday's raging sun rides high,
And night's brief round is hurried through.
As the lilies languish on their stems,
So pleasing tresses fail the head;
And swiftly is the radiance dimmed
Which gleams from the tender cheeks of youth!
Each day hath its spoil from the lovely form;
For beauty flees and soon is gone.
Who then would trust a gift so frail?
Nay, use its joys, while still thou mayst;
For silent time will soon destroy thee,

And hours to baser hours steal on."¹⁵

Closing their song, the chorus announces the arrival of Theseus in the distance.

Act III opens with a speech by Theseus who relates his rescue from dreadful Dis by Hercules. He questions the cause of the lamentations from the threshold of his home. The nurse informs him that Phaedra is determined to commit suicide to escape some secret woe. When Theseus orders the doors of the castle to be opened, Phaedra is discovered inside with a sword in her hand. Theseus tells her to put the sword away and confide her woe to him. Phaedra begs to be allowed to die with her woe secret. Theseus persists in finding the cause of her grief. After much hesitation, his wife confesses that her honor has been stained. Stunned by the disclosure, Theseus demands to know the name of the guilty person. Phaedra refuses to utter the name, saying that the sword reveals the adulterer's name. Immediately Theseus recognizes the royal sword as that of Hippolytus. Horrified and enraged, Theseus asks where his guilty son is. Upon learning that he has retreated to the forest, the irate Theseus proclaims that he will chase Hippolytus to the ends of the earth for vengeance. Praying to his father, Neptune, for the grant of his third promised wish, he calls upon the god of the sea to arouse his watery monsters and swelling

¹⁵Ibid., p. 194.

waves to destroy Hippolytus before the day ends.

The act closes with a song by the chorus who bewail the fact that the wicked prosper and that virtue has no recompense. Although Hippolytus is not definitely mentioned, the chorus, in its lament, implies that his goodness and innocence are not rewarded. At the end of their song, the chorus announces the arrival of a messenger in the distance.

Act IV opens with the entrance of a messenger who announces to Theseus that Hippolytus is dead. Evidently relieved, Theseus calmly asks the manner of his son's death. The messenger relates that as Hippolytus was driving his chariot along the shore, a huge sea monster in the form of a bull was launched upon the shore by a gigantic wave. When Hippolytus skillfully diverted his steeds to avoid the monster, the latter charged the steeds, terrifying them so that they became unmanageable and plunged toward the rocks. Hippolytus tried to curb the reins and guide the whirling chariot but the horrible monster ran along beside the steeds, continuing to charge them until they went mad with fear and broke from control. Hippolytus was hurled among the loosened reins, and becoming tangled in them, was dragged over rocks and thickets as the empty chariot careened after the wild horses. Finally Hippolytus' wounded and bleeding body was pierced and caught upon a pointed stake. Halted momentarily by the sudden impact, the steeds with wild force, broke away, leaving Hippolytus' body torn and

mangled. The messenger says that the friends of Hippolytus are at that moment attempting to gather the scattered fragments of his body for the funeral bier. Theseus is sorrowful, not because Hippolytus is dead, but because he is guilty of the death.

The act closes with a song by the chorus, claiming that those in lofty stations are smitten by fate more often than the common people, (a typical characteristic outburst of philosophy by Seneca):

"How on the wheel of circumstance
We mortals whirl! 'Gainst humble folk
Does fate more gently rage, and God
More lightly smites the lightly blest.
A life in dim retirement spent
Insures a peaceful soul; and he
Who in a lowly cottage dwells
May live to tranquil age at last."¹⁶

Thus Theseus, in exalted position is now overcome with woe. The song closes with announcement that Phaedra is approaching with a drawn sword.

As the fifth act opens Phaedra laments over the mangled corpse of Hippolytus. Theseus asks why she grieves over the hated body. Weeping, she confesses that she falsely charged Hippolytus with the crime and grieves that she has caused the death of one so chaste and innocent. Declaring that justice claims her life as retribution for that of the guiltless Hippolytus, she falls upon the sword and dies.

¹⁶Ibid., p. 206, lines 1122-1129.

Overcome with grief, Theseus expresses his wish to be returned to Dis from where he has recently escaped, to suffer and be punished for the death of his innocent son whom he condemned to such an unjust death. The chorus interrupts to remind him that he will have sufficient time for remorse and that his duty is to prepare a fitting burial for his son. Aroused from his lethargy, Theseus begins to piece together the mangled fragments of Hippolytus' body, lamenting bitterly as he plans for the funeral rites. The drama closes with his curt order for Phaedra's burial:

"Let earth on her be spread,
And may it heavy rest upon her head."¹⁷

¹⁷Ibid., p. 211, lines 1278-1280.

CHAPTER III

Phaedra of Racine

Jean Racine wrote his famous version of the Hippolytus legend, Phaedra, in 1676 in the Neo-classical era of literature in France. The forerunner of the age of enlightenment was Francois de Malherbe (1555-1628), a poet and critic who preached reason, moderation, dignity, and conformity to the established rules of writing.¹⁸ Racine put his theories and the rules of the French classicists into practice in this drama by following the dramatic unities of Aristotle and expressing them in the polished Alexandrine verse which was prevalent in the Neo-classical period. In my opinion his attempts resulted in a pseudo-classic drama, although following the trend of the period, he imitated classical authors.

For his version of the legend, he used both Euripides' and Senecas' dramas as direct sources. In some passages we find a very close imitation of the Greek drama; in others a close imitation of the Latin play. He followed Seneca in making Phaedra herself declare her love to Hippolytus and in making the nurse originate the slander against him which is heightened by the loss of his sword. In Euripides'

¹⁸Percy Hazen Houston, Types of World Literature, p. 627.

version it is the nurse who, unknown to Phaedra, informs Hippolytus of the Queen's love for him. As in Seneca Phaedra survives Hippolytus, and in a dying confession, clears him of all guilt. He closely imitated Euripides at the banishment scene of Hippolytus, and in detail in Phaedra's confession to the nurse in Act I, Scene III. He borrowed from Seneca the false rumor of Theseus' death, and closely imitated Phaedra's avowal of her love to Hippolytus in Act II, Scene V. From the beginning of Act III on, we find fewer direct imitations.

The modifications of the earlier dramas which we find in Racine's work are due to the influence of the standards set up by the French classicists of his age. Theorists of the French classic tragedy conceived the chorus as impairing to a degree, dramatic unity.¹⁹ So Racine dispenses entirely with the chorus employed by both Euripides and Seneca in their drama. To the original characters of the earlier dramas, Racine adds four more:

Aricia, princess of the royal blood of Athens

Theramenes, tutor of Hippolytus

Ismene, companion and confidante of Aricia

Panope, one of the female attendants of Phaedra

The original nurse of Phaedra found in the earlier versions is described as "formerly the nurse and now the

¹⁹Paul Decharme, Euripides and the Spirit of His Dramas, p. 315.

chief attendant of Phaedra." Racine also gives her a name, Oenone, which the two earlier tragedians failed to do. The elevation of the nurse's station is due to the rule of the Neo-classical period that only persons and things connected with the upper classes should appear in drama. The French pedants believed that this would result in more lofty and classic dramas. Therefore Racine has the old slave nurse become practically a duenna. Another rule established by the French classicists was that every play should contain a love intrigue. Hence, Racine introduces a secondary character to provide a love interest for Hippolytus in the person of Aricia.

The age itself, dominated by the court of Louis XIV, was an artificial one. Its speech and manners were modeled on those of the absurd, polished, pastoral romances which were so popular at the time. In Phaedra, Racine employs this figurative, elegant, and gallant language which is so remote from the simplicity and naturalness of the Greek model. The translation I used, that of Lacy Lockert, is in rhymed iambic pentameter couplet.

Phaedra is considered a powerful representation of human agony, and it has provided great scope to the most distinguished actresses down to the present time. Sheldon Cheney said of it:

"Phaedra is the greatest acting part in the French language: that is, it gives the actor richest opportunity for scoring by a display of rhetorical

passion."²⁰

However strikingly effective for the stage, the intensity of the drama makes it verge on melodrama, particularly in the declaration scene, Act II, Scene V.

In his drama Racine subordinates everything to Phaedra. He represents her as being driven by almost uncontrollable passion whereas Euripides depicts her as a victim of fate not destined by her own will. Maybe to slightly lessen her guilt, Racine has Theseus' death reported, and has the nurse originate the slander against Hippolytus. However she is just as guilty as the originator of the slander when she allows it to exist, and participates in it. Even when she learns that the youth loves another, she allows him to be exiled by his father for her false accusation. Supposedly, her bitter jealousy leads her to conceal the truth.

Brazenly confessing her love to Hippolytus, she is just as repulsive to us as she is to him. Her confession of slander and guilt to Theseus come too late as the innocent youth is dead. Her remorse seems to derive from the fact that she cannot have the love of Hippolytus and satisfy her passions rather than from the fact that she wronged an innocent youth, her husband, and her children. She is a portrait of a base, selfish woman vibrating with strong passions of love, anger, jealousy, hatred, bitter anguish, and remorse.

²⁰Sheldon Cheney, The Theatre, p. 321.

Hippolytus is again the chaste, innocent youth, but depicted less admirably than in the earlier dramas. He remains unmoved at the report of his father's death and seems happy to consider himself on the throne as he frees Aricia, and talks of love to her. The strong filial affection of the original Greek youth is sadly lacking. When going to exile he plans to enlist friends at Argos and Sparta to make war on his father to regain his and Aricia's rights. How remote from the original youth who blessed his father who exiled him! The flowery language of a court gallant engrossed in love-making makes Racine's hero incongruous with the bold huntsman devoted to Artemis.

Theseus is a subordinate character whose flowery language seems inconsistent with what we expect from an old adventurous warrior hero. Again, he jumps to conclusions before investigating the facts and orders his son to exile without sufficient evidence. At the conclusion he plans a fitting burial for his son and accepts Aricia as a daughter - shabby repair for his hastiness and lack of judgment.

Oenone is the faithful servant who will sacrifice herself for her mistress. For that we admire her loyalty, but not for inducing her mistress to satisfy base desires and passions. She becomes despicable when she originates the slander against the innocent youth and shamelessly reports the slander to his father. We warrant her suicide at the end deserving, but certainly incapable of righting her

wrong or of establishing the truth.

Aricia is a rather charming portrait of a demure seventeenth century princess, but any character more remote from semi-mythological Greek background can scarcely be imagined. Her love for Hippolytus seems sincere and unselfish when she admonishes him to flee without her for his safety. Even to save her lover from his father's wrath, she does not reveal the truth since she promised Hippolytus to keep his secret. Her honor and innocence is a refreshing contrast to Phaedra's character.

Like Euripides, Racine lays the scene of his drama in Troezen. Before Act I the author supplies a stage setting not provided in the Greek and Latin plays. However, in comparison with modern stage settings, Racine's is meager in stating that the scene takes place in the palace's inner court from which doorways lead to the apartments of Hippolytus, Aricia, the Queen, and to the exterior of the palace, and that a bench is placed near the center of the court.

Act I opens upon a conversation between Hippolytus and his tutor, Theramenes. The youth declares his plan to leave Troezen to seek his father who has been absent for six months. Theramenes replies that his wide search for Theseus has been unsuccessful and that Hippolytus' would prove likewise. He attempts to dissuade Hippolytus' worries about his father's safety by surmising that Theseus

may prefer secrecy as he may be enjoying himself wooing some maiden. Hippolytus rejects this hypothesis, stating that Theseus is in love with his wife, Phaedra, and constant to her. He admits that he desires to leave Troezen anyway. When Theramenes asks him if this desire is to escape his step-mother whose hatred for him has led her to seek his exile, Hippolytus confesses his love for Aricia, the captive princess of his father's enemy. Since Theseus would never consent to their union, Hippolytus wishes to leave his native land. Theramenes is surprised to discover that Hippolytus, who shunned love for so long, has finally succumbed to it, but now understands why the youth has lost his former interest in hunting. The tutor advises him to accept and confess the virtuous love, as he believes that Theseus will understand and sanction it.

Oenone, Phaedra's nurse, enters lamenting the secret malady of her mistress as she announces her coming. Hippolytus departs, not wishing to agitate the ill Queen by his presence which is obnoxious to her, and Theramenes goes with him. The distraught Phaedra enters and weakly sinks upon the bench as she expresses her longing for death. Oenone chides her for such a desire and upbraids her for fasting for the past three days during which she has had no sleep either. In an effort to stimulate a desire to live in the Queen, Oenone tells her that she should wish to live for the sake of her children so that they will inherit the

throne, instead of her enemy, Hippolytus. Distracted Phaedra replies that she prefers to die with the guilt on her soul secret. Throwing herself at Phaedra's feet, the nurse beseeches her mistress to admit to her the secret recesses of her soul with its inner troubles. In consequence of Oenone's tears and ceaseless crying, Phaedra reveals that she is torn by love for Hippolytus. The nurse is horrified as the Queen relates how she loved Hippolytus at first sight, and how she attempted to extinguish Venus' flame by offering sacrifices to the goddess and burning incense at her shrine. Since her efforts were in vain, and the guilty love engulfed her soul, she desires to die.

Panope, one of the Queen's attendants, enters with the report of Theseus' death, and the warning that Hippolytus designs to place Aricia on the throne. After Panope's departure, Oenone tells Phaedra that she was going to seek death with her mistress, as there was no other alternative, until the news of Theseus' death arrived. According to her theory, the death of the King altered Phaedra's relationship with Hippolytus for whom she can now profess her love. She incites the Queen to live by telling her that if she dies, her son will be a slave; and if she lives, a King. Phaedra could make Hippolytus King, which would be his lot, and later Phaedra's son would succeed them. She urges Phaedra to unite with Hippolytus to fight their common enemy, Aricia. The act closes with Phaedra's avowal to

fight for her son.

As Act II opens, Aricia and her companion, Ismene, are seated in the courtyard awaiting the arrival of Hippolytus, who has asked to see Aricia there. Ismene informs Aricia that the people of Troezen have already hailed Hippolytus as king, and that she believes that the latter will be more lenient with Aricia than his father was. When Aricia asks the manner of Theseus' death, Ismene replies that two reports were given: one, that he was drowned while carrying off a new love, the other, that he could not escape from hell, where he had gone with Pirithous.

When Ismene states her belief that Hippolytus loves Aricia, the latter admits her deep love for the youth, claiming that she would enjoy being a slave to him. Hippolytus enters, gallantly informing Aricia, that since he is King of Troezen, he releases her from captivity, and sets her free. He relates that the populace at Athens consider three for the throne: Aricia, Phaedra's son, and himself. He willingly relinquishes all claim to that throne since, as the son of a barbarian mother, he was disbarred from inheriting the throne of Athens. Since his father wrested the Athenian throne from her family, he restores it to her, the rightful successor. He says that the throne of Crete will reward Phaedra's son with sufficient princely richness. When Aricia wonders why one who hates her should deal so generously and bountifully

with her, Hippolytus reveals that for six months he has deeply loved her and offers her his heart. Formerly defying love, he found himself subjected to the universal law until he no longer found enjoyment in the hunt, being haunted by his love for her.

Theramenes enters, announcing that the Queen, desiring to speak to Hippolytus, is coming. Before departing with Ismene, Aricia tells Hippolytus that of all his gifts to her, his love is the greatest. Hippolytus tells Theramenes to make preparations so that they may sail swiftly. When Phaedra enters, Hippolytus tries to console her with the thought that Theseus may still be alive. Phaedra reveals that it is he, not Theseus, whom she loves. In a long speech she tells Hippolytus how she endeavored to overcome her passion for him without success. When the youth is horrified at her admission, she asks him to kill her with his sword, and madly seizes it. When Hippolytus warns her that someone is coming, she departs blindly clutching his sword with Oenone following her.

As Theramenes enters he questions why Hippolytus is so pale and swordless. When the youth refuses to share the dread secret with his tutor, the latter informs him that the Athenians have chosen Phaedra's son as their King. He also reports a rumor that Theseus is still alive. The act closes with the departure of Hippolytus and Theramenes to investigate the truth of the rumor.

Act III opens upon the same scene as Phaedra relates to Oenone how Hippolytus pitilessly repulsed her and disdained her proffered love. Despondently she muses over his loathesome refusal to touch his sword once her hand had soiled it. Oenone advises the bitter Queen to seek happiness in ruling Athens. Phaedra reminds the nurse that it was at her suggestion that she proffered her love to the youth. Since she has so shamelessly confessed her feelings to him, she decides that her only course is to win him by a last desperate attempt. Hastily she dispatches Oenone with the words:

"Try every means to win him. Words of thine
Will find him more accessible than mine.
Urge him, weep, wail; stir him with piteous show
Of Phaedra dying; use the voice of woe; -
I sanction all. In thy hands is my fate.
Go. To decide it, thy return I wait."²¹

As Oenone hurriedly leaves on her mission, Phaedra prays to Venus to smite Hippolytus with love for her. Suddenly Oenone re-enters with the news that Theseus has returned. Phaedra bemoans her fate and resolves to die rather than confront her husband with such a guilt on her soul. Oenone devises a plan for Phaedra to accuse Hippolytus of violating her, using his sword as evidence. Phaedra acquiesces, saying she has no alternative.

With Hippolytus and Theramenes, Theseus enters to

²¹Lacy Lockert, The Best Plays of Racine, p. 258.

embrace his wife. When Phaedra rejects him, claiming herself unworthy to share his bed, the King asks Hippolytus the meaning of the strange reception. His son replies that the explanation rests with Phaedra. Then he asks his father's permission to leave Troezen on youthful adventures as he lists some conquests Theseus had achieved when he was his age. Theseus reveals the nature of his absence when he relates his horrible captivity in Hades. During his trying confinement he longed for his loved ones and regrets that upon his return, none will embrace him. His son wants to leave him and the honor of his wife has been betrayed. Pondering his cool reception he enters the Queen's apartments to learn what culprit has wronged him. The act closes as Hippolytus leaves to formulate a plan to inform his father of his love for Aricia, believing that he has nothing to dread from Phaedra's claim since he is innocent.

As Act IV opens on Theseus and Oenone we learn that the latter has accused Hippolytus of violating the Queen's honor, as Theseus rages at the thought that his own son could be guilty of such a dastardly deed. Oenone tells Theseus that Phaedra attempted to commit suicide rather than hurt her husband with the base account of his son's crime. She relates how she saved Phaedra from suicide for Theseus

"And pitying her sorrows and thy cares,
I have unwillingly explained her

tears."²²

Then Oenone asserts that Phaedra's early hatred for Hippolytus and attempt to have him exiled was due to her knowledge of his lawless love for her. Thereupon she departs to comfort her mistress.

Hippolytus enters innocently asking the reason for his father's angry countenance. Enraged at what he believes to be a pretense of innocence, Theseus furiously reviles his son as a monster and knave for violating his step-mother's honor. He commits his son to exile and petitions his father, Neptune, for his promised boon, which is to pour his angry wrath upon Hippolytus to avenge Theseus.

Hippolytus appeals to his good reputation which all Greeks know is above reproach. When he tells his father that he loves Aricia, the irate King accuses him of deceit to conceal his passion for Phaedra. Angrily he orders Hippolytus to exile as a traitor. As Hippolytus leaves, Phaedra enters asking Theseus to spare his son. The King tells her that since he has prayed to Neptune, she will be avenged. He reveals to her how Hippolytus, after his base crime against her, claimed that he loved Aricia, as an artifice. Then Theseus leaves to pray at the shrine of Neptune to have his prayer granted.

In a monologue Phaedra reveals that she came to accuse

²²Ibid., p. 267, lines 22-24.

herself to Theseus and to save Hippolytus by telling the truth. She is extremely jealous that Aricia, or any woman, could win the heart of Hippolytus whom all supposed impervious to love. When Oenone enters Phædra informs her that Aricia has won the heart of Hippolytus. The miserable Queen regrets that she has prolonged her life as she envies their chaste, lawful love. In a jealous rage she confesses that greater than all the anguish of her secret passion and bitter remorse when Hippolytus repulsively spurned her proffered love is the idea that he loves another. Wretchedly she expresses fear to die and be judged since

"My sins are heaped
Already to overflowing. I am steeped
At once in incest and hypocrisy.
My murderous hands, hot for avenging me
Are fain to plunge themselves in guiltless blood."²³

Oenone attempts to dissuade her fears by telling her that fate cast the spell over her, that the gods themselves have burned with fires of forbidden love, and that weakness is natural to mankind. In a bitter passion Phædra makes the most dramatic speech in the entire play:

"What do I hear? Such counsel darrest thou give?
'Tis thus thou even to the end wilt strive
To poison me! Wretch! So didst thou ruin me!
Thou brought'st me back to the light, whence I would
flee.
Thy prayers made me forget my duty - made
Me see Hippolytus whom I shunned, afraid.
What hast thou wrought? Why did thy wicked tongue

²³Ibid., pp. 278-279.

Blacken his life with charge of violent wrong?
 He will die, perhaps, for that! The cruel desire
 May be fulfilled of an infuriate sire.
 I will hear no more! Thou monster that I hate,
 Begone, and leave me to my piteous fate!
 May a just heaven repay thee worthily,
 And may thy punishment forever be
 A terror unto all whose artful please
 Would basely nourish, like thine, the weaknesses
 Of luckless rulers, push them to the brink
 Of sin to which their hearts incline, nor shrink
 From making smooth for them the fatal path
 Of crime. Accursed flatters! The wrath
 Of heaven can give no deadlier gift to Kings."²⁴

The act closes upon Oenone lamenting that she has given up everything, and gone to the basest extreme to serve her beloved mistress for such a reward.

Act V opens upon a conversation between Hippolytus and Aricia in which the latter desperately urges Hippolytus to reveal the truth to Theseus. If Hippolytus is not moved by her tears and thoughts of separation from her, she beseeches him to remove the foul stain from his honor and have his father revoke the curse upon him. Asking her to keep his secret, Hippolytus reaffirms his true love for Aricia, but replies that he could not bear to shame his father by informing him of the detestable infidelity of his wife. When he urges Aricia to flee with him, she professes her love for him, but rejects his plan as it would be against her honor to flee ununited. Hippolytus reassures her that she shall accompany him as his wife since at the beginning of their journey they will stop to swear eternal love for

²⁴Ibid., p. 280.

each other at a temple near the gate of the city where one cannot swear falsely without promptly dying. As Aricia hears the King approaching, she bids Hippolytus to flee, telling him that she will soon follow him.

When Ismene enters with Theseus Aricia instructs her companion to make preparations for their departure. As Ismene leaves to carry out the commands of her mistress, Theseus asks the latter the reason for Hippolytus' presence there. Blushing, she replies that the youth was bidding her a last farewell. Defending her lover's honor, she berates the King for believing lying tongues so readily and begs him to revoke his curse. Theseus, claiming that she is blinded by love for Hippolytus, refuses. Aricia retorts that although Theseus has freed the land of many monsters, he has let one live. She leaves abruptly, before, as she says, she may break her silence which she promised to Hippolytus.

Her defense of Hippolytus and insinuation of deceit set Theseus to pondering until he decides to investigate the crime further. Panope, one of Phaedra's attendants, enters to report that Oenone has drowned herself and that the distraught Queen is seeking suicide. Upon receiving this doleful news, Theseus regrets his curse and hasty judgment of his son. He orders Hippolytus to be recalled immediately so that he can defend himself.

Theramenes enters to announce that Hippolytus is dead. In a long speech he gives a detailed account of the death of

the youth. As Hippolytus was driving his chariot along the shore, a huge wave washed a gigantic monster, half bull and half dragon, before the chariot. Undaunted, the youth drove towards the monster, wounding him in the flank with his spear. The monster, roaring with pain and fury, fell at the horses' feet, covering them with fire which issued from his throat. Terrorized, the steeds became unmanageable, heeding neither voice nor rein of their master. During the tumult a god was seen who goaded the steeds until they ran over rocks where the axle of the chariot broke. Hippolytus, entangled in the reins, was dragged over the sharp rocks until his body was one mangled mass of wounds. When the wild horses finally stopped, Theramenes and the guards rushed to the injured youth. To Theramenes, the dying Hippolytus uttered his last wish, that his father treat his captive, Aricia, kindly and restore her conquered realms to her.

At that moment Aricia, coming to take Hippolytus as her husband, reached the spot. When she finally realizes that the mangled corpse is that of her lover, she vainly calls to him and then faints at his feet. At the completion of Theramenes' gory narrative, Phaedra and Panope enter. Theseus, informs the Queen of his son's death, lamenting that he wished that death upon his only son, but comforting his wife that she is avenged. The repentant Phaedra tells Theseus that his son was innocent, and how she cast incestuous eyes at him. She relates how Oenone, to protect

her mistress, accused the chaste youth to prevent his revealing her mad passion for him to his father. Having taken poison before her confession, Phaedra dies in penitence.

Theseus, lamenting the death of his innocent son, repents his curse. As he plans to give his dead, beloved son the honors of a burial he so richly deserves, he claims that from that day onward, Aricie shall be a daughter to him.

CHAPTER IV

Phaedra and Hippolitus of Edmund Smith

Edmund Smith used the Hippolitus legend in his drama Phaedra and Hippolitus in 1709, in the Neo-classical era of literature in England. When the theatres were reopened in 1660, after being closed during the Commonwealth, they were patronized by a select court group interested in seeing their polite society of the time presented upon the stage. French influence was great because English courtiers, during their forced exile in France, had learned to like the neo-classical literature and drama popular there at the time. Many English dramatists endeavored to imitate the French Neo-classical rules of writing with moderation and dignity. Even technical devices and plot situations were copied from the French.

Dilettantism was fashionable in this period of Restoration drama. The more natural expression of Elizabethan drama was hindered by imported classicism. The standard of the critics was the French interpretation of the rules of Aristotle. The critics extolled pseudo-classical plays, and French tragedy was the main source of pseudo-classicism of the time. Restoration dramatists modified their style to prevailing tastes in Paris, and the English courts.

Like many other authors of the period, Smith dedicated his drama to a Lord and leader of his political party (waig) to obtain his patronage. The play was not very popular at its initial presentation. Comedy was more popular at the time, and his classical heroic play appealed only to the court group. However the play was revived and soon became almost popular. It was played at intervals until nearly the end of the century and the book was widely read.

Allardyce Nicoll says of the drama of the period:

"It has already been pointed out that the typical form of eighteenth century tragic drama, to which has been given the name of Augustan, was an amalgam of diverse forces - pseudo-classicism influencing it externally, pathos entering in to colour certain scenes and characters, Shakespearian style directing occasionally dialogue and theme, and heroics flickering luridly if spasmodically over the whole production. Quite naturally, this type presents no very decided and characteristic elements; it is to be regarded as a plundering attempt on the part of men who knew not what they desired to furnish actable plays for the theatre. They could give nothing definite to the stage; their plays are amorphous, chaotic in plot and undistinguished in character drawing, yet such as they are they form the typical dramatic productions of the period."²⁵

Smith, like many other authors of the age, followed the rules of the Neo-classical school by imitating classical authors, adhering to the unities of time, place, and action, having only persons of high station in their drama, and using the polished, elaborate speech of court society. His play is so decorous and correct that it may be termed a scholar's

²⁵Nicoll, Allardyce, History of Early Eighteenth Century Drama, p. 96.

play for following the established rules too rigidly. Structurally, it is well rounded and finished, but dramatically it is neither effective nor convincing. Smith goes to such an extreme to follow the Neo-classic rules of writing that his work, in this tragedy, seems pseudo-classic.

In my opinion, the tragedy is a good closet drama, but not "good theatre". Although the style and poetry are beautiful, the language is too polished and luxuriant for dialogue. Smith does not seem to have a real understanding of the theatre. The stage directions are meager, mainly notations of entrances and exits. In Act III, there is no exit for Ismena noted, and yet she is not present at the end of the act. In Act III also, Phaedra orders Hippolytus and Ismena to be returned to her. At the end of her speech, they are brought before her, impossible and inconsistent for a time element. In Act III, the scene between Hippolytus and Ismena verges on melodrama.

Although Smith imitated Racine's tragedy, his version lacks the dramatic power found in Racine's treatment of the drama. Smith also went directly to Euripides and Seneca for much of his material, although he follows Racine most closely. He borrowed the idea of Hippolytus in love from Racine. He follows the French author closely in the scene in which Hippolytus learns Phaedra's guilty secret.

Robert Anderson says of his drama:

"In 1709 his Phaedra and Hippolytus, a Tragedy, was acted at the theatre in Hay-market. No play was ever introduced with greater advantages, or had ever excited greater expectations. It was countenanced by persons of the highest rank, and the most distinguished abilities of both parties. (He was a whig.) It was honoured with a prologue by Addison, and an epilogue by Prior. It was exhibited at an extraordinary expense, and inimitably performed by Betterton, Booth, Barry, and Oldfield. But its intrinsic excellence was not sufficient for its support on the stage; for it was hardly heard the third night. Addison, pseudo-classicist, in the Tatler, mentions this neglect as a disgrace to the nation, and imputes it to the fondness for operas then prevailing.

It was bought, however, by Lintot, the bookseller, at an advanced price, and the dedication accented by Halifax, the Whig patron of literature, who had prepared to reward Smith with a place of 300 pounds a year; but either from pride, caprice, or indolence, he neglected to attend him, and missed his reward, by not going to solicit it."²⁶

I think it may be interesting here to note the dedication, prologue, and epilogue.

Dedication to Lord Halifax:

"My Lord,

As soon as it was made known that your Lordship was not displeased with this Play, my friends began to value themselves upon the interest they had taken in its success; I was touched with a vanity I had not before been acquainted with, and began to dream of nothing less than the immortality of my work.

"And I had sufficiently shewn this vanity in inscribing this Play to your Lordship, did I only consider you as one to whom so many admirable pieces, to whom the praises of Italy, and the best Latin poem since the Aeneid, that on the peace of Rigswick, are consecrated. But it had been intolerable presumption to have addressed it to you, my Lord, who are the nicest judge of poetry, were you not also the greatest encourager of it; to you who excel all the present age as a poet, did you not surpass all the preceding ones as a patron.

"For in the times when the Muses were most

²⁶Robert Anderson, Complete Edition of the Poets of Great Britain, vol. 6, p. 586.

encouraged, the best writers were countenanced, but never advanced; they were admitted to the acquaintances of the greatest men, but that was all they were to expect. The bounty of the patron is no where to be read of but in the works of the poets, whereas your Lordship's will fill those of the historians.

"For what transactions can they write of which have not been managed by some who were recommended by your Lordship? It is by your Lordship's means, that the universities have been real nurseries for the state; that the courts abroad are charmed by the wit and learning, as well as the sagacity of our ministers; that Germany, Switzerland, Muscovy, and even Turkey itself begins to relish the politeness of the English; that the poets at home adorn that court, which they formerly used only to divert; that abroad they travel, in a manner very unlike their predecessor, Homer, and with an equipage he could not bestow, even on the heroes he designed to immortalize.

"And this, my Lord, shows your knowledge of men as well as writings, and your judgment no less than your generosity; you have distinguished between those, who, by their inclinations or abilities, were qualified for the pleasure only, and those that were fit for the service of your country; you made the one easy, and the other useful: you have left the one no occasion to wish for any preferment, and you have obliged the public by the promotion of the others.

"And now, my Lord, it may seem odd that I should dwell on the topick of your bounty only, when I might enlarge on so many others; when I ought to take notice of that illustrious family from which you are sprung, and yet of the great merit which was necessary to set you on a level with it, and to raise you to that House of Peers, which was already filled with your relations; when I ought to consider the brightness of your wit in private conversations, and the solidity of your eloquence in public debates; when I ought to admire in you the politeness of a courtier, and the sincerity of a friend; the openness of behaviour which charms all who address themselves to you, and yet that hidden reserve which is necessary for those great affairs in which you are concerned.

"To pass over all these great qualities, my Lord, and insist only on your generosity, looks as if I solicited it for myself; but to that I quitted all manner of claim when I took notice of your Lordship's great judgment in the choice of those you advance; so that all at my ambition aspires to, is, that your Lordship would be pleased to pardon this presumption, and permit me to profess myself, with the most profound

respect,

Your Lordship's most humble,
And most obedient Servant,

Edmund Smith"²⁷

Also of great interest, I believe, is the Prologue by
the Neo-classical essayist, Mr. Addison:

"Long has a race of heroes fill'd the stage,
That raut by note, and through the gamut rage;
In songs and airs, expresses their martial fire,
Combat in trills, and in a feuge eroire;
While, lull'd by sound, and undisturbed by wit,
Calm and serene you indolently sit;
And from the dull fatigue of thinking free,
Hear the facetious fiddles repartee:
Our homespun authors must forsake the field,
And Snakespeare to the soft Scarletti yield.

"To your new taste the poet of this day
Was by a friend advis'd to form his play:
Had Valentini, musically coy,
Shun'd Phaedra's arms, and scorned the proferr'd joy.
It had not mov'd your wonder to have seen
An eunuch fly from an enamour'd queen:
How would it please, should she in English speak,
And could Hippolytus reply in Greek?
But he, a stranger to your modish way,
By your old rules must stand or fall today,
And hopes you will your foreign taste command,
To bear, for once, with what you understand."²⁸

At this point I must also include the Epilogue by Mr.
Prior:

"Ladies, tonight your pity I implore
For one who never troubled you before:
An Oxford man, extremely read in Greek,
Who from Eu--ripides makes Phaedra speak;
And comes to town to let us moderns know
How women lov'd two thousand years ago.

²⁷Edmund Smith, Phaedra and Hippolytus British Theatre, vol.
25, p. Aij-Aiij.

²⁸Ibid., vol. 25, p. Aiiij.

82.
If that be all, said I, e'en burn your play,
Egad, we know all that as well as they:
Shew us the youthful handsome charioteer,
Firm in his seat, and running his career;
Our souls would kindle with as gen'rous flames
As e'er inspired the ancient Grecian dames:
Ev'ry Ismena would resign her breast,
And ev'ry dear Hippolytus be blest.

But, as it is, six flouncing Flanders cares
Are e'en as good as any two of theirs;
And if Hippolytus can but contrive
To buy the gilded chariot, John can drive.

Now of the bustle you have seen to-day,
And Phaedra's morals in this scholar's play;
Something, at last, in justice, should be said,
But this Hippolytus so fills one's head.--
Well! Phaedra lived as chaste as she could,
For she was Father Jove's own flesh and blood;
Her awkward love, indeed, was oddly fated,
She and her Poly were too near related;
And yet that scruple had been laid aside,
If honest Theseus had but fairly dy'd:
But when he came, what needed he to know,
But that all matters stood in statu quo:
There was no harm, you see; or grant there were,
She might want conduct, but he wanted care.
'Twas in a husband little less than rude,
Upon his wife's retirement to intrude:
He should have sent a night or two before;
That he would come exact at such an hour;
Then he had turned all tragedy to jest,
Found ev'rything contribute to his rest;
The picquet friend dismissed, the coast all clear,
And spouse alone, impatient for her dear.

But if these gay reflections come too late
To keep the guilty Phaedra from her fate,
If your more serious judgment must condemn
The dire effects of her unhappy flame;
Yet, ye chaste matrons, and ye tender fair,
Let love and innocence engage your care;
My spotless flames to your protection take,
And spare poor Phaedra for Ismena's sake."²⁹

Smith changes the plot of the legend by having Theseus
send Hippolytus out to commit suicide, rather than to exile.
Hippolytus kills the guard and returns to find that his

²⁹Ibid., vol. 25, pp. 94-95.

step-mother has revealed his innocence so he is happily reunited with his lover, Ismena. This ending so reverses the plot that the depth and power of the original tragedy is lost.

Smith's chorus is superfluous, entering only once so that it seems it was included only to give the drama a more classical atmosphere. The elaborate, polished language is inconsistent with the simple ancient theme. His drama with its political intrigue may have very well occurred in England, rather than in ancient Greece where he lays his scene. The characters in his play are much weaker than any of the previous ones included in this study; and no one is outstanding. Although Racine made his heroine more despicable than the earlier Phaedras, by having her driven by human passion rather than destined fate, she is a powerful, dynamic Queen. The Phaedra of Smith seems inconsistent when in Act I she tells Lycon that she will stifle her love for Hippolytus, ignore her passion, and live for her children. In the same breath she prays to Venus to gain the youth's love for her. She is cruel and unfeminine when she informs Hippolytus and Ismena that she will have Ismena killed as Hippolytus watches her groan and bleed to death. Although Lycon is the originator of the slander against Hippolytus, she is just as guilty when she fails to reveal the truth. Only when she learns that the youth has been sent out to commit suicide, therefore

eliminating the possibility of satisfying her passions, does she reveal the truth. Even then she blames Lycon for inciting her to commit her crimes. She is the least admirable of all the Phaedras.

Hippolytus as a court gallant, isn't convincing as the Greek youth, fond of the forest and the hunt. However, he is honorable when he does not reveal Phaedra's guilt to his father, although he knows this will incur his father's anger, and probably result in his own death. We admire him also for telling Lycon his opinion of him frankly.

Ismena is a typical English maiden of the seventeenth century. Her love for Hippolytus leads her to declare that above all else, she desires his happiness, even if it may be with another. She urges him to go to the Queen, profess his love to her, and marry her to save his life. Yet when Lycon has her believe that the Prince has done this, she berates her lover for being so ardent with the Queen. Maybe this is a natural reaction for one in love, but it appears inconsistent. We admire her, however, for keeping Phaedra's guilt secret, even though it may mean the loss of her lover, his life, and her own.

Cratander's part is very small, simply a servant agreeing with Lycon, minister of state, and carrying out his orders.

I think the portrayal of Lycon, the Minister of State, is the strongest in the drama. He is a new character which

Smith introduces. Particularly obnoxious, he rejoices at the announcement of Theseus' death, so that he may rule through the Queen. He plots to obtain the throne for himself and his son. Although he believes that Hippolytus will reject the love of the Queen, he urges her to offer it to the youth, stating that a scorned woman will be so confused that he will have complete control of the kingdom. He is the originator of the slander against Hippolytus, and the bearer of it to the King. Hippolytus analyzes him well when he terms him a lying, false, base flatterer with a cringing, fawning smile.

Theseus is a weak character whose elaborate speeches are remote from the hearty, adventure-loving Greek hero. He is hasty in accepting the false accusation against his son, poor judgment for a ruler, hasty to repent when he learns of his innocence, and hasty to forgive when his son lives.

In the Dramatis Personae of Smith we find:

Theseus, King of Crete

Hippolytus, his son, in love with Ismena

Lycon, Minister of State

Cratander, Captain of the Guards

Phaedra, Theseus' Queen, in love with Hippolytus

Ismene, a captive princess in love with Hippolytus

No stage directions or setting are given.

Act I opens upon a scene in which Lycon, the Minister of State, and Cratander, the Captain of the guards, are

discussing the grief of Phaedra. When Cratander suggests that she is worrying because her husband, the King, has been away at war for three months, Lycon rejects that reason because he has observed that the Queen loathed Theseus, and scorned his affection. Cratander wonders why such a happy mother, widow, and Queen, as Phaedra was, could have married old Theseus, whereas the handsome Hippolytus would have been more suitable for her. Lycon replies that Phaedra didn't know Hippolytus before her marriage to his father, and that she fears and detests the youth anyway. Cratander believes that she should fear him as he may dispute the crown with Phaedra's son. Lycon agrees with him, saying that they must watch the popular and courageous Hippolytus now that the Queen is ill, as he orders Cratander to have his guards ready. When Cratander departs, Lycon, in a monologue, expresses his desire that the prince must fall whether Phaedra lives or not, scorning the youth's virtue and honesty. Since Hippolytus hates him for a flatterer, he despises the boy, and inwardly seeks his destruction and downfall while outwardly he pays him affectionate obeisance.

When Ismena enters, the wily Lycon questions why she attends Phaedra whose husband slew her father, and robbed her of her throne. Ismena replies that she could not delight in others sorrows, and so laments Phaedra's griefs which have lead her to fast and to go and go without sleep for the past three days. She describes the mental anguish

of the Queen whose grief drives her to delirious phrenzies.

Pale and weak, Phaedra enters with her attendants complaining of the jewels and elaborate royal garments she wears. She tells Lycon that she longs to visit the forest to stretch her weary limbs out on the grass and partake of all the refreshing joys there. When Lycon assures her that he will take her to the forest, she chants a hymn to Diana, goddess of the woods, at the end expressing a desire to die. Lycon admonishes her to live for the sake of her son, to see him on the throne rather than the proud Hippolytus, since the latter may extend his vengeance upon her son for her exile of him and cruelties to him. Phaedra replies that she has preserved her guilty life too long and yearns to die to avoid the confession.

Lycon begs her, by all the love, faith, and zeal he has shown her since her infant years, to confide in him so that he can comfort her. He shrewdly questions her until she reveals that her grief is caused by love for Hippolytus which she cannot dispel from her mind. At this disclosure, Ismena, in an aside, fears that the Queen will win Hippolytus from her. Should that happen, she would wish him happiness and then depart to some isolated place where he would not hear of her death.

Lycon, Ismena, and attendants swear to keep Phaedra's confession secret. Phaedra describes how love for Hippolytus possessed her at first sight of him as the

priests joined her hand to Theseus in their betrothal. The Queen then gives a vivid description of how her stepson rescued her from a monstrous boar who would have killed her. He was so god like when he approached her after slaying the boar that a mad passion for him tore her breast. She became ill with fear and love, but enjoyed being sick because Hippolytus would come to talk to her. She describes her intense struggle to subdue this love and her consequent burning of incense at the alters to petition the aid of the gods. When all her resistance proved in vain, she tried to hate Hippolytus and avoid her passion by banishing him from Crete. Even in exile his vision tormented her. Lycon asks her permission to try to induce Hippolytus to love her. Phaedra refuses, saying that even if Hippolytus returned her love, she would rather die than wrong her husband, Theseus.

A messenger enters to announce the death of Theseus. In an aside, Lycon rejoices that now he, "the earthborn", can obtain possession of the throne and leave the crown to his son. The messenger reports that Theseus died in a battle in which his friend, Philotas, was taken a prisoner. The messenger claims to have seen a barbarian wearing Theseus' armor, and riding his horse. Lycon tells Phaedra that the barrier to her happiness has been removed, that now she can forget the wrinkled Theseus, and take the youthful Hippolytus into her arms. The Queen prefers not to admit such a thought, declaring that she is glad that

she gave her empire to Theseus, but refused him the bridal bed. Lycon attempts to persuade her to tempt the youth with both. Phaedra, fearing that the good Hippolytus would reject her proffered love, decides against his plan, resolving to try to live and leave the rest to the gods. Lycon asks her for her signet to order what she commands. Saying that with it he takes her fate, she gives it to him. She departs, praying to Venus to aid her to gain Hippolytus' love. Left alone, the crafty Lycon discloses his plan to propose Phaedra's love to Hippolytus whose haughty soul will scorn it. If Phaedra is scorned, he plans to rule the empire, stating that it is easy to work to vengeance the raging mind of a scorned woman.

Act II opens with a messenger's announcement to Phaedra, Lycon, and Ismene, that Hippolytus is approaching. At the sight of the youth, the Queen swoons. Hippolytus believes that her abhorrence for him causes her to shrink from him. When Phaedra recovers, she assures him that she does not hate him, but quite the contrary. The youth believes she insinuates a mother's love for him until Lycon plainly tells him that Phaedra is in love with him, and that she dared not make the admission herself. When Hippolytus is stunned at the revelation, Phaedra claims that she never loved Theseus, and because she denied him her marriage bed, he sought refuge in stormy seas, rocks, and waves, less cruel than his wife. Hippolytus accuses her

of the murder of his father if he dies for that reason. Phaedra warns Hippolytus not to rouse her vengeance as shame, rage, and confusion could drive her to unheard-of crimes to murder him, herself, and all who share her secret. As she departs she says:

"He's safe, who from the dreadful warning flies
But he that sees its opening bosom dies."³⁰

As Phaedra exits, Hippolytus plans to trust the Ionian waves rather than a woman's fiercer rage. Lycon steps in to tell him that he must not leave the Queen to her despair, and showing her signet, orders the guards to watch Hippolytus. The youth berates Lycon as ungrateful for setting him under guard when his father, Theseus, saved Crete when it was besieged by an enemy. He charges him as a lying, false, base flatterer with cringing bowing and fawning smile. Lycon tartly replies that if haughty Hippolytus wants to live now, he must obey the Queen. Hippolytus replies that he would rather die than sacrifice his honor, as Lycon and Crantander depart.

Ismena enters to tell Hippolytus to take Phaedra into his arms and forget her. To this he replies that he loves her and could not live without her. Ismena suggests that if he gives the Queen some hopes, she may let him live. His reply is that he would rather die than stoop to that.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 27, vol. 25.

Ismena warns him that she will commit suicide that night if he resolves to die. When she insists that she will kill herself, Hippolytus agrees to do whatever she commands, in order to prevent her suicide. Ismena orders him to rush to Phaedra to tell her that he loves her and will marry her - in fact, agree to anything to save his life. As Hippolytus departs at her command, Ismena prays to the powers above to punish her, and not Hippolytus, if the fraud offends their justice.

Here we have the first appearance of the chorus to question Ismena of her reaction if Hippolytus wed the Queen at her command. The maiden replies, that knowing he had done it at her request, she could die, knowing that she had made him happy. She reaffirms her desire for death as an only comfort when she could not be happy without Hippolytus, and could not endure to see him in another's arms. Lycon enters to describe in detail the amorous approach of Hippolytus to the Queen who is blissfully happy in his love and returns his passion with ardor. As he departs to prepare for the nuptials upon Phaedra's order, Ismena decides to retire and not disturb the lovers' joys. She despairs that maybe Hippolytus succumbed to the Queen's charms and really fell in love with her. She says she cannot stay to watch his love for another as the chorus advises her to wait.

When Hippolytus enters, Ismena congratulates him upon

his success, but tells him that she could die less regretfully if he had been less ardent with Phaedra. Accusing him of deserting her for Phaedra, she asserts that she still loves him so much that she will joyfully die to save him.

Hippolytus forces her to listen to him as he reaffirms his love for her only. He says he conversed with the Queen, but neither thought, nor spoke, nor promised to love or wed her. His conversation was feignedly friendly and at this faint ray of hope, Lycon dismissed the guards.

Ismena rejoices that he has been true to her and begs his pardon for her fear caused by jealousy. She urges him to flee while he is unguarded, and admonishes him:

"And when you're absent, when your godlike form
 Shall cease to cheer forlorn Ismena's eyes,
 Then let each day, each hour, each minute, bring
 Some kind remembrance of your constant love;
 Speak of your health, your fortune, and your friends
 (For sure those friends shall have my tenderest wishes)
 Speak much of all; but of thy dear, dear love,
 Speak much, speak very much, and still speak on."³¹

Hippolytus promises that his "dear love" shall always be his theme and asks Ismena to flee with him as the boat is ready and waiting. Ismena refuses because of her reputation, to flee with a young prince. However, in flowery speeches Hippolytus persuades her to accompany him to freedom.

As Act III opens Lycon is found upon the stage rejoicing that Phaedra has returned to health and vigor. When she enters he praises her great beauty, telling her that

³¹Ibid., p. 37.

Hippolytus will pay homage to her and adore her. The Queen interrupts him to order that all Crete must rejoice with her, that sacrifices must be made, and prisoners set free from their dungeons. A messenger enters to announce that Hippolytus cannot be found, but that he was seen driving toward the port with Ismena. Phaedra curses Ismena and her beauty which charmed Hippolytus. Distraught, she raves that her former grief and despair over her secret love cannot compare to the potency of her jealousy. Upon the suggestion of Lycon, Phaedra dispatches guards to capture Hippolytus and Ismena and return them to her.

Cratander enters to announce that he has seized Hippolytus and Ismena upon the Queen's orders, and has the captives outside. As the Prince enters, Phaedra berates him for feigning promised love for her. Disdaining her, the youth stoutly denies that he promised love to her. Phaedra retorts that his looks, eyes, and motions promised love. When Hippolytus refutes this, she belittles him and his entire family, claiming that he is a philanderer like his father, and that his barbarian mother was neither virtuous nor chaste. In vain Hippolytus attempts to defend his parent's reputation to the irate Queen. Lycon announces that the clamoring, waving crowds surge toward the palace. Fearing that they may desire to give the crown to Hippolytus and Ismena, he rushes out to prevent it.

When Ismena is brought in, Phaedra compares her to a

vulture as she had watched Phaedra in her illness. To obtain vengeance and to make Hippolytus suffer, she announces that she will have Ismena killed as Hippolytus watches her bleed and groan. Ismena replies that she will welcome death to save Hippolytus and expresses a hope of meeting him in the Elysian fields. The Prince beseeches the Queen to let her anger fall upon his head, rather than upon the guiltless virgin. Ismena reveals that the deception was her idea and that, with all her wiles, she had to beg Hippolytus to perform the fraud because he was confined and doomed to death by Lycon.

The Queen expresses ignorance of such an order, claiming that she loved Hippolytus too much to order his death. If he died, she would drown herself. When the youth expresses pity for her, she asks him to accept her love and Kingdom. When he disdainfully refuses her with scorn, she catches his sword to stab herself. Lycon rushes in to snatch away the sword and report that Theseus has returned. Phaedra is confused as her horror of facing her husband grows, and she runs off.

Lycon carries off the sword, saying that it may be useful later. Theseus enters to announce that, to save his life, he feigned death, although his steed and arms were taken. A kind Greek nursed him in his home until his wound healed. Theseus embraces his son and suggests that they go together to Phaedra. Hippolytus tells him that he wants to

leave Crete. When his father asks the reason, he replies that he wishes to seek adventure and acquire renown as Theseus's son should. Theseus is hurt at his son's desire to leave him. The act closes with a soliloquy by the King in which he states that he would have been happier, had he never met and loved Phaedra.

Act IV opens upon a soliloquy by Lycon, revealing his plan to persuade the Queen to live so that he can rule through her, consequently gaining power, and eventually the throne. When the Queen despondently expresses a desire to die, Lycon asks why she should relinquish fame to her insulting enemy, Hippolytus. For the sake of her bride and to guarantee that her son shall rule her Kingdom, he urges her to live and woo Theseus. Phaedra claims that her love for Hippolytus is no longer secret and that she would be unable to conceal it from Theseus. Maybe his son would accuse her to him. Lycon incites her vengeance against Hippolytus by reviewing his disdainful rejection of her proffered love, and tells her that she must accuse him first, and have Theseus banish him. She thanks old Lycon for being so faithful and for trying to save her and her baby, as she leaves.

Theseus enters to ask Lycon if his wife still hates and sneers him. Lycon replies that she has great love for him, but the gods have doomed that she must never again view him. The Minister of State vividly describes her tears softly

flowing and longing for Theseus, now raging against heaven that she was wronged, and that she is near death from grief. Cleverly he incites the King's anger against the person who wronged innocent Phaedra, and finally announces that Theseus' son is the guilty one. Theseus connects Hippolytus' desire to flee with his guilt. However, unwilling to believe his son capable of such an act, he says he will investigate the matter to obtain proof of his guilt before he enacts his vengeance upon him. However, Lycon produces Hippolytus' sword as evidence, claiming that the latter overcame the Queen with it. Credible Theseus, enraged, furiously seeks dire vengeance upon his son.

When Hippolytus enters, Theseus questions his relations with Phaedra, but the former in no way betrays the Queen's admission of love for him. He angrily berates his son and accuses him of adultery, force, and incest, as Isemene appears and eavesdrops. His father accuses him of forcing his Queen mother to incest by the sword which he exhibits. The youth, stunned and astonished by the accusation, flounders for a defense as why his sword was in his step-mother's possession. He is honorable not to disclose the guilty passion of the Queen, and defends himself only by asking his father to believe his innocence from his past reputation. Theseus is not impressed with the intangible evidence as he holds the sword, and therefore deems him guilty.

At this crucial moment Ismena enters and asks permission of Theseus to listen to her story which will shield Hippolytus' honor. Theseus replies that even though she is the daughter of a hated foe and even though her beauty is loathsome to his eyes, justice bids him to hear her. Thanking the King, she kneels and confesses that Hippolytus could not have loved Phaedra for he had loved her before. When Hippolytus corroborates her statement, Theseus still believes that Hippolytus is guilty of wronging Phaedra, and is incensed that he should at the same love the daughter of his enemy. Calling Cratander, he orders him to take Hippolytus out and let him commit suicide with his own sword. When Hippolytus continues to plead innocence and love for his father at which Theseus becomes furious and orders the guards to take his hypocritical son away. Ismena pleads to be allowed to go with Hippolytus, but Theseus refuses.

Act V opens upon Phaedra's tirade against Lycon for causing all the miseries and ruin upon all, terming him a villain guilty of monstrous crimes. He replies that he did what he did to serve her and save her life because his love for her is so deep. Phaedra orders the guards to carry him away. Theseus enters, apparently having received a message from the Queen. The old King, anticipating reconciliation, confesses his deep love and emotion for Phaedra. The latter reveals that being false, base, and foul, she is not worthy

of him.

A messenger enters to say that Hippolytus has slain himself with the sword that Cratander gave him. Phaedra grieves at the news claiming that Hippolytus is guiltless, and admits her guilt of how she

"With bestial passion woo'd your loathing son.
And when deny'd, with impious accusation
Sullied the lustre of his shining honor;
Of my own crimes accus'd the faultless youth,
And with ensnaring wiles destroyed that virtue
I tried in vain to shake."³²

When Phaedra confesses that she is a horrid mixture of crimes; parricide, incest, perjury, and murder, she accuses Lycon of plunging her into her woes. The enraged Theseus berates Lycon and looses his fury upon Phaedra calling her a murderess and claiming she will be tortured if there is any revenge in hell. Phaedra replies that she is willing to suffer torture for restitution of the grief she has brought him, and reveals that she has taken poison which will soon end her life. She states that all the guilt is hers, and claims that Hippolytus was doomed by her madness and Lycon's hatred. She pursues him with chaste desires where he and Ismena shall be happy while she is in anguish. Mistaking Theseus for Lycon, she attempts to stab him, but the guards prevent her. Learning her mistake and lamenting the slow action of her poison, she stabs herself before committing other crimes.

³²Ibid., p. 83.

Theseus grieves that he doomed his innocent son to death. Ismena enters looking for Hippolytus. Theseus tells her not to mourn the youth, and promises to return her throne to her so that she will reign in Athens. She replies that she loves his son and cannot live without him, and so attempts to stab herself. At that moment Hippolytus enters to stop her. He reveals that although he aimed the sword at his own, he turned it and slew Cratander. Then the guards at his wish, brought him to the King to receive his doom. Theseus replies that his doom will be to live forever in Ismena's arms and rule the empire their fathers fought for. Hippolytus rejoices that he at least possesses his beloved Ismena. He regrets the hapless fate of Phaedra whom he claims:

"Her faults were only faults of raging love,
Her virtues all her own."³³

Theseus gives them his blessing and suggests that they go to offer incense of thanks to the gods for all the wonders wrought in their favor. The act closes with the speech of Hippolytus:

"The righteous gods, that innocence require,
Protect the goodness which themselves inspire;
Unguarded virtue human arts defies,
Th' accused is happy, while the accuser dies."³⁴

³³Ibid., p. 92.

³⁴Ibid., p. 93.

CHAPTER V

Hippolytus - Julia Ward Howe

American drama in the modern sense originated in 1870. Until that time European models were imitated closely, revealing little or no characteristics of a national drama. A student and lover of the classics, Mrs. Julia Ward Howe reverted to Euripides' and Seneca's dramas on the Hippolytus legend for the theme of her play and imitated these models closely. American dramas at that time were written mainly for the popular actors, making drama subservient to acting. Like other authors of the day Mrs. Julia Ward Howe wrote her version of the Hippolytus legend in 1851 for the popular American actor, Edwin Booth. Impressed with Booth's masterful projection of tragedy, she chose a classic subject for him in the role of Hippolytus. Several years elapsed before Booth received the play, and it was not until 1864 that plans were made to present the play in Boston with Booth playing the part of Hippolytus and Charlotte Cushman the part of Phaedra. After rehearsals began, the production was cancelled for a variety of reasons, all uncertain, and Booth never acted the part written for him by Mrs. Howe.

In 1911 Margaret Anglin presented the play in Boston. She took the part of Phaedra and Walter Hampden the part of

Hippolytus.

Mrs. Howe's play is written in blank verse. The language, simple, direct, and natural is closer to Euripides than any of the other plays in this study. Her play is more Greek than any since Euripides. She employs the old Greek idea of gods' interference with fate predominating over human passion. Her stage directions are more explicit than those of any of the earlier authors, and completely sufficient. However, in Act II she directs that Leton hides behind an altar, and then gives no directions for his consequent appearance. In the drama we learn that Theseus is absent from home, but it is not clear as to where he is. In Act IV Phaedra's rapid self-strangulation is not natural within the time element. In Act V Theseus knows of his son's innocence and his wife's guilt, but where he obtains this information is not revealed. We surmise that either Leton or Oenone must have confessed the truth, although this is difficult to believe of the latter after her firm loyalty to her Queen displayed throughout the play.

Mrs. Howe's tragedy consists of five acts. She has Artemis reveal the catastrophe to the hero, as in Euripides' prologue, in Act I at the Temple of Diana when the priestess and virgins bear offerings to her. Later the goddess appears in the drama to warn Hippolytus and to lament at his death. The only new character which Mrs. Howe introduces is Leton, a soothsayer, to whom Oenone brings the Queen for

advice. Providing that from then on she will follow his advice, Leton gives the Queen a love potion which will make Hippolytus enamoured of her when he drinks it. He goes to Phaedra's home to assist her to accomplish her aim of gaining Hippolytus' love. When the Queen entertains Hippolytus, he chants songs to influence the youth to yield to her charms. As far as is discernible, he is unlike Phaedra's adviser in Smith who assists the Queen to further his own gain. Even when the Queen has committed suicide, and he is made prisoner by Theseus, loyally he does not reveal the deceit of the Queen to save himself.

Mrs. Howes' characters are strongly and well-portrayed. Cenone is the typical devoted servant, loyal to her mistress although it may mean her own destruction.

Hippolytus is the same youth we find in Euripides, manly, sport-loving, and honest. He has great respect and love for his father as evidenced by his sorrow at the rumor of his father's death, and of preferring banishment to hurting and disillusioning his father with the truth about his wife. When Phaedra accuses him unjustly of the awful crime, he keeps silent, although innocent, and goes into exile rather than wound his father with the truth about his unfaithful wife. Nobly, the youth refuses shelter from his friend Creon after he is exiled, in case that sheltering him may cause Theseus to vent his wrath upon his friend. For the same reason he refuses to allow Creon to accompany him to

banishment. Mrs. Howe's hero is a well-drawn admirable character in the true spirit of the legend.

Phaedra is a strong character clearly portrayed. She sacrifices anything to satisfy her desires. We find her despicable when she reveals her love to the innocent youth, and crafty when she attempts to win him with soft music, and wine containing her love potion. We find her ruthless when she falsely tells Theseus that his son first attempted to obtain his power in his absence, and then to violate his marriage bed. The only sorrow felt at her death is that before it, she did not reveal the truth to exonerate the innocent youth.

Mrs. Howe, said to be a studier of the Greek classics, reveals this in imitating the Greek masters rather than their later mimics. Although very remote in time, her work is the closest to Euripides. Her work travels less smoothly and rapidly than Euripides. However it has dramatic appeal, a good plot and characterization, simple and direct which make great drama.

As customary in classic tragedies, Mrs. Howe has the goddess Artemis warn the audience of a catastrophic ending to Hippolytus. As Scene I opens we find Artemis, her priestess, and virgins, in the temple of Diana. The Priestess presents Artemis with numerous votive gifts from her worshippers. The gift which pleases the goddess the most is a golden-tipped arrow from Hippolytus. Ignoring the other gifts, she questions the Priestess about the manner and words which accompanied the youth's gift. The Priestess

replies that Hippolytus very reverently performed the holy rite, standing with bowed head for a long time before the statue of the goddess before vowing himself to her with the words:

"Artemis, reign within this heart forever!
Thou art the chosen goddess of my faith".
He cried: "Oh! take my life ere other love
Than thine, profane the breast I vow to thee!"³⁵

As the Priestess and virgins withdraw, Artemis reveals what the gods have destined for Hippolytus, and what she will do to alleviate his fate:

"The gods have written that Hippolytus
Die young, but I will intercede with Jove
To stretch the golden spanning of his years
To utmost bound of Fate. Then, what's too short
In length of days, I'll piece with length of fame.
Immortal love shall hedge thy path about
The evil shall not taint thee with their breath,
Nor to vile passion bend thy hero soul.
And dying, thou shalt live before men's eyes,
The fairest thing remembered as a man."³⁶

In this speech Artemis reveals to the audience the early death of Hippolytus, his scorn of passion as offered by Phaedra, and the eradication of the scandal of his reputation which Phaedra creates.

As Artemis departs for the chase Scene II opens in the forest with a monologue by Aphrodite who reveals her part in the ensuing action, that because of her enmity for Artemis, to whom Hippolytus has dedicated himself, and

³⁵Julia Ward Howe, Hippolytus, Monte Cristo and Other Plays, p. 78.

³⁶Ibid., p. 78.

Because of the contempt with which Hippolytus treats her, she will enrage him and employ Phaedra to "Scorch his manhood with her flame."³⁷ As she departs Hippolytus, Polydorus, and Thenexetes enter, discussing the futility of the day's hunt which seemed witch-hunted. Hippolytus declares that it appeared as if a hunter were before him chasing the animals, and that he saw a baffling white garment which disappeared as quickly as it had appeared.

Thenexetes and Polydorus report at the call for dinner as Hippolytus calls upon Artemis to assist him in his hunt. The goddess appears to him as an Amazon, but he does not recognize her. However, in a beautiful description of the goddess, he tells the stranger how closely she resembles Artemis in mien and dress. Because of the stranger's similarity to his beloved huntress, he asks if she knows where Artemis hides when she comes to earth. If he knew the place, he claims that he would borrow Hermes' winged heels to find it and Apollo's lyre to praise her. In the disguise of an Amazon, Artemis warns him of how others met misfortune, punishment, and death for rashly seeking the goddess. Therefore, the latter must be merciless. Hippolytus rebukes that attribute of his idol and narrates how the goddess appeared to him in his sleep:

"Thou'rt mine," she said, "I know thee from thy birth."³⁸

³⁷Ibid., p. 79.

³⁸Ibid., p. 82.

From that moment on he vowed he would serve her even to death. He says that rather than be false to Artemis, he would sooner betray his father's faith and die a ruined out-cast in the latter's wrath.

Creon and the hunters enter shouting that the stag is at bay. As Hippolytus draws his bow and says that he promises the arrows' spoil to Artemis. The Amazon springs past him as she says:

"The goddess claims her own."³⁹

As she disappears the thunderstruck Hippolytus and Creon realize that it was the goddess herself who was conversing with Hippolytus. The latter laments that he did not recognize her, but rejoices that he saw her and claims that the meeting with her will bolster his morale, spirits in times of trouble.

As Hippolytus, Creon, and the hunters depart, Phaedra and her nurse, Cenone, enter. The Queen berates the nurse for listening to her secret passion which she murmured in fever. Cenone replies that because of her loyalty, Phaedra should have confided in her long ago, and asks how the passion started. The Queen relates how unhappily she was wed to Theseus. In a long speech she recalls how the King first took her to the games where she first saw the handsome youth whose beauty overwhelmed her. He won the race but the

³⁹Ibid., p. 82.

"pang of death" came to her when Theseus ordered her to crown his son. She fainted as she cried to exile the boy forever from her sight, and completes her tale:

"And he was exiled from my presence, he
To kiss whose feet I would have craved myself
In the extremity of death. Thou'st heard
My dreadful tale; describe me as thou wilt."⁴⁰

Oenone replies that Phaedra is innocent since her heart is struggling against the passion, and therefore free of guilt, and claims that the torrent of the love is inflicted by the gods. She suggests that some costly sacrifice to the gods may win their favor and ease the pain which Phaedra is resisting. The Queen retorts that she has decided to resist the pain no longer and has concluded that if the prince, Hippolytus, would return her love for one happy hour, it would be "worth the rest." To achieve the one aim to reach his heart, she arose from her bed.

As Hippolytus and Creon approach, Phaedra and Oenone hide behind the trees to observe them. Hippolytus tells Creon that he feels a peace come over him in the forest as if the favorite goddess of his faith attends, guards his steps, and keeps life's troubles away. As they leave, Phaedra despairs that she could ever win the virgin heart of Hippolytus. Oenone tells her of a powerful wizard friend she has at Aphrodite's shrine who knows all auguries. She suggests that they go to the shrine with costly gifts for

⁴⁰Ibid., p. 84.

aid. Phaedra is elated over the suggestion and they depart.

Act II opens with a scene in the Temple of Venus with a conversation between the Priest and the soothsayer, Leton. Observing the approach of Phaedra and Oenone, Leton asks permission to deal with the woman of high rank. The Priest replies that he must first receive her offerings to sacrifice to the gods and then Leton may deal with her. Leton withdraws behind the altar as closely veiled Phaedra and Oenone enter. Oenone informs the Priest of the costly gifts her mistress has brought to the shrine: twelve sheep of perfect fleece, a flock of doves, and a calamys wrought with gems and flexible gold. The Priest and Oenone leave for the porch of the Temple where the offerings are received.

Phaedra flings herself at the feet of the statue of Aphrodite and petitions the goddess to make Hippolytus fall in love with her and return her love. She begs for one hour to please Hippolytus and for it, will be content to perish. Leton replies that she will please him. When the frightened Queen calls for Oenone, Leton assures her that he is the aid Aphrodite has sent her. He counsels her to adorn her beauty and invite the youth secretly to a banquet where love will overcome him with intoxicating wines and the aroma of flowers.

When Phaedra answers that Hippolytus cannot be moved by any woman's heart or beauty, the soothsayer tells her that he has the solution in a phial which he obtained for a high

price from an Egyptian priest. He claims that the drop contains love's sweet madness, and if Phaedra will place the drop in a cup of wine, and has Hippolytus taste the drink, she will obtain her heart's desire. When Leton asks if she is willing to pay its price, removes her jewels and gives them to him promising to send more gifts. Leton tells her that she must promise to allow him to advise all her future acts for that purpose. When she promises, he gives the vessel to her. She joyfully calls Oenone, and they depart.

Placed in the woods at twilight Scene II opens upon a conversation between Artemis and Aphrodite. Artemis laments that misfortune shadows Hippolytus and she cannot warn him of it because Aphrodite with Jove allocated power annihilates her work. She begs Aphrodite to allow her to aid one "whom all the gods have cause to love." Aphrodite retorts that she may aid anyone but Hippolytus, who refuses to honor her.

When Hippolytus passes through the forest, Artemis warns him not to attend Phaedra's feast, nor to drink the wine she will give him. However, Aphrodite binds her scarf around Artemis, dissolving her power, so that Hippolytus does not hear her.

Artemis: "The gods commend thee not, if help of thine
Can wait on deeds so evil."

Aphrodite: "We and they
Alike are servants of the Fate unseen,
Before whose mandates Jove himself is still."⁴¹

⁴¹Ibid., p. 90.

As the gods depart, Hippolytus and Creon enter. Hippolytus tells Creon that since the gods have talked to him he feels he is no longer a youth and yearns to visit strange countries to perform deeds of heroism as his father did. He says he wishes that he could wander carefree as a youth again, but that he fears his father is dead. Creon tries to reassure him that his brave, victorious father is safe and laments that since his departure the city is not properly managed. When Hippolytus wonders why Phaedra banished him, Creon tells him that the Queen is jealous of him because of her enmity for his mother and because of precedence, Hippolytus, and not her child, is heir to the throne. Hippolytus states that he has no desire for his father's inheritance.

A messenger enters with an invitation from the Queen for Hippolytus to have dinner with her that evening. The youth is surprised to receive the invitation and Creon warns him not to accept it as he believes the Queen has an evil intent to get Hippolytus into her presence. The messenger defends the Queen and says that she is not hostile towards Hippolytus, but asks him to forget her former grievances and comfort her as Theseus' son. When Hippolytus replies that Theseus has other children of Phaedra's, the messenger retorts that they are too young to comfort her. Although Creon strongly advises the Prince to refuse the invitation, Hippolytus decides to accept it for peace and kindred's sake,

and to forget past grievances. After the messenger leaves, Creon counsels Hippolytus not to go as "the queen has a double purpose in all her ways," and warns him that she is beautiful as she is wicked."⁴² Hippolytus departs saying that his divine love will make him invincible.

Scene III occurs in an elaborately furnished banquet room. Soft music plays as Oenone stands near Phaedra who reclines under a canopy. The messenger enters to announce that Hippolytus has accepted the invitation and is approaching. Oenone departs with the messenger as Hippolytus enters and politely greets the Queen, who bids him sit beside her. The Prince hesitates, but sits down when Phaedra insists. She looks at Hippolytus, praising his every feature in detail, declaring that, even as she gazes upon him, it seems as if Theseus whom she worships, is before her. Hippolytus changes the subject from laudation of Theseus' physical appearance to praise of his father's lofty mind, honorable soul, and bravery. Phaedra sorrowfully recalls the blot on his deeds when he betrayed and abandoned her sister Ariadne. Hippolytus asks her not to talk about the only blemish on his father's record.

Phaedra calls in Leton to sing the glory of Theseus' fame, accompanied by the lyre. She offers the wine to Hippolytus, but he refuses, saying that he will first listen

⁴²Ibid., p. 94.

to the song. As Leton recites the story of Theseus' departure from his father's house and describes his slaughter of the minotaur Hippolytus thanks him and gives some gold to him. Leton continues, eulogizing the abandoned Ariadne, picturing her lonely death in detail until Hippolytus says he deeply regrets that such a shameful deed was ever committed. Cleverly, Phaedra, seeing Hippolytus in a sad mood, snatches the opportunity to order Oenone and Leton to leave. She brings the wine to the downcast youth and tells him to drink to let Bacchus dispel his sorrows and make him smile again. He doesn't accept it, and when the Queen insists that he drink for courtesy, he angrily refuses and orders her to remove the wine and garlands. Wishing to absolve himself from the heavily scented air he pulls back the curtain and sees the moon. He talks aloud to Dian, his goddess of the moon, and promises to follow her beckoning. Crying "All hail to Artemis!"⁴³ he flings the cup down at Phaedra's feet and hastily exits.

Desperately Phaedra calls after him to stay. Summoning Oenone, she orders her to follow him and plead with him to return to her. A cloud passes over the moon and Oenone cannot see which way Hippolytus went. Phaedra curses Artemis, goddess of the moon, for foiling her attempt.

Mrs. Howe notes "Tableau" here with no directions or

⁴³Ibid., p. 101.

description.

Act III opens in a vestibule in Phaedra's palace. Leton laments over Hippolytus' escape from him, but calling upon jealous Acheron to lend him his Furies, he vows to trap Hippolytus. Oenone enters to report that despairing Phaedra is ill with grief and lies wishing for death. Leton declares that he has a plan which will make Phaedra better, and they depart to go to the Queen.

Scene II occurs in a room in the palace where Hippolytus recounts his experience and actions at Phaedra's dinner of the previous night to Creon. Creon congratulates him for leaving abruptly and not tasting the proffered wine, claiming that she may have poisoned it to eliminate Theseus' heir. A herald enters to announce the death of Theseus to Hippolytus, who laments his father's death. The herald tells him that the people wish him to rule in his father's place. The youth replies that he is too grief-stricken to consider anything like that at present. Vowing vengeance upon the murderer of his father, Hippolytus asks the herald who the assassin was. The herald replies that the gods of Styx held him captive when he invaded their realm. When the herald announces the arrival of a deputation of the people, Hippolytus asks Creon to speak to them, and departs to be alone. The people enter, expressing their desire to have Hippolytus rule them as his father's successor. Creon advises them to wait until the grieving youth has sufficient

time to master his sorrows before approaching him with the scepter.

After Creon and the deputation of people depart, Leton enters leading Phaedra, who is clad in mourning. Leton advises her to approach Hippolytus meekly, and predicts that she will conquer him when he is weakened and benumbed in his sorrow. When Hippolytus enters Phaedra modestly pleads with him as a suppliant, since she is Queen no longer, and Hippolytus now is sovereign. She begs him to share their common sorrow together. She entreats him to consider her as a sister, friend, mother, or anything that will be dear to him. When Hippolytus, rejecting her offer, replies that his mother is dead and removed from all sorrows, Phaedra in desperation confesses that she only pretended a mother's love for him, but that in reality she holds another love for him.

Realizing that Hippolytus cannot conceive the subtle suggestion of her desires, Phaedra describes how she fell deeply in love with him at first sight. Baring her secret love for him, she sinks clasping his knees for mercy for her consuming love. Wrathfully, Hippolytus commands her to loose her hold before he murders her. The Queen tells him to murder her, if he desires, but that she will pledge herself to Hell for his love. In vehement language the Prince scornfully reprimands her for her debasement. Declaring that he is glad his father escaped such shameful infamy,

departs. Phaedra curses the youth for pitilessly and haughtily spurning her desperately, humbly proffered love and curses Artemis who deprived her of his love.

Act IV opens in Phaedra's apartment, where Oenone tells Leton how Phaedra remains alone in an angry mood since Hippolytus resisted her proffered advances. When Phaedra enters, contemplating suicide, Leton informs her that Theseus is alive. When she declares that she would rather die than face her stern husband, Leton reminds her that this is an opportunity for her to obtain revenge upon the man who scorned her. Spurred on with this idea, Phaedra resolves to find vengeance upon Hippolytus. Oenone and Leton depart just before Theseus enters to relate how coldly Hippolytus greeted him upon meeting in the street, and tells Phaedra that she, too, has changed. The Queen tells Theseus that as soon as his son learned of his death, he not only sought the throne, but also attempted to obtain his innocent widow, who repulsed him with her weak hands.

The enraged Theseus calls his soldiers to order Hippolytus into his presence. When Phaedra declares that she desires to leave before the youth arrives, Theseus hides her behind a curtain and impatiently awaits his son's arrival. When Hippolytus enters Theseus asks him why he greeted his father so coldly. Hippolytus replies that, loving his father deeply, he is overjoyed that he is alive, and thanks the gods for his miraculous return. When

Hippolytus innocently affirms his deep love for his father, the irate Theseus charges him with attempting to seize his power and violate his marriage bed. The youth denies the base accusations and demands his father to bring forth the person who made such base, untrue accusations. Angrily drawing back the curtain, the King reveals Phaedra, severely reproving Hippolytus for treating her like a slave in the market. The astounded Hippolytus declares that he has lived too long and since faith and love have died before him, begs his father to kill him. When Hippolytus asks Phaedra if she assures him of those charges to his father, she nods assent.

Hippolytus tells her that now he realizes all her clever scheming and tells her to keep her falsehood in her breast and walk honored with it to her grave. Phaedra faints and Theseus wrathfully cursing Hippolytus, orders him to leave before he kills him. Hippolytus calls upon the gods to repay the curse with blessings and to keep the ancestral tree strong. Telling Theseus to remember these last words of his, he departs. Theseus calls Oenone to tenderly bring Phaedra to her bed and revive her from faint. He calls upon Poseidon to abide by his promise to grant him a wish for his Kingly gifts and service. Then he petitions Poseidon to utterly destroy Hippolytus when he approaches the god's regions.

Scene II opens in the forest upon a chorus of satyrs, lamenting the woe destined for their beloved Hippolytus whom

they will miss and see no more. The satyrs depart as Hippolytus enters. Creon enters and tells Hippolytus that he will accompany him in this exile. The youth replies that he would prefer to have his friend remain in Athens and serve the state well, charging him never to reveal the treachery and falsity of Phaedra's accusations to his father.

A messenger from the King enters to inform Hippolytus that Theseus orders him to start his exile at earliest dawn by traveling south along the coast until he receives further instructions. The King has also proclaimed that anyone who follows the banished Hippolytus is also exiled. For the latter reason Hippolytus tells Creon that he must not accompany him. His friend declares that he no longer loves Theseus because of his unjust treatment of Hippolytus. Then Hippolytus begs him to love his father, Creon wants him to return to his home to spend the night with him until dawn arrives. Hippolytus refuses in case his father would be angry with Creon for harboring his banished son. After a fond and sorrowful farewell between the two friends, Hippolytus entreats the forest to shelter him until dawn arrives to light his way to banishment.

As he reclines, the Nymphs and Satyrs steal softly out and group around him as the moon slowly rises on the scene. Directions are given for soft music and a tableau.

As Act V opens Phaedra is discovered in the palace, lamenting that she has sent Hippolytus whom she loves, to

his death. Distraught, she discloses her desire to die with him and even go to Erebus if she could accompany him. When Oenone and Leton enter, she asks them to leave her, blaming them for her misfortune. She flings a purse of gold to them, saying that they would sell their souls for gold. When they suggest that she sleep, she refuses as nightmares frenzy her. In despair she attempts to commit suicide with her dagger, declaring that she will keep the silence that Hippolytus bid her. Leton disarms her, but as Theseus enters, she strangles herself with her scarf, determined to keep the silence imposed upon her by Hippolytus.

Theseus is grief-stricken to find his young wife dead and angrily turns upon Oenone and Leton, demanding the cause of Phaedra's death. When they refuse to tell him, he calls his guards to bind and confine them. Oenone faithfully vows that she will not betray her beloved mistress, but will keep her secret until she dies. As the guards lead the bound servants out, Theseus regrets that now he has not the consolation of one loving heart.

Scene II opens on the seacoast at the twilight just before dawn. A chorus of the Winds in long, dark robes and hoods, dance around chanting stanzas:

"One: Wrath and wrong and scorn and hate
Wefted in one web of Fate,

I know that shall plague the State."⁴⁴

The chorus replies that they obey as messengers of ill, claiming that Theseus would relinquish his kingdom could he but send them back again.

The sorrowful Artemis enters asking the winds not to rejoice in the terrible duty they have to perform. Uttering her hatred of Venus she vows vengeance upon her. She requests the winds to keep everything as calm as possible. Replying that they obey one who is more powerful than she, they will keep the "hush of death" until her darling dies. As Artemis hears the footsteps of her beloved Hippolytus, she withdraws and hides to be near him.

Scene III opens on the seashore with a chariot waiting in the background against a view of Athens in the distance. Lonely Hippolytus glances back at his native city, lamenting that he has to leave it. He questions the gods as to why he should have to suffer such a false wrong and depart from his beloved city in such a disgraceful way.

Artemis enters and tells him that she knows of his stepmother's crime. Hippolytus asks her not to reveal it. When she asks him when it should be known, he replies not until his father, Theseus, has died without the shame of such a scandal. Artemis rejoices that even in his deplorable, banished, state, Hippolytus is still perfect. Confessing

⁴⁴Ibid., p. 123.

the deep love she has borne for him many years, she warns him not to ride by the sea.

Hippolytus replies that he must follow the route his father ordered which is by the sea. She tells him that with her supernatural power she will hide him in a cloud until danger passes. Hippolytus refuses her offer, determined to carry out his father's command. Although Artemis reminds him that his angry father has claimed a boon from Poseidon which may even mean his death, the undaunted Hippolytus bravely departs to face his destiny. Artemis prays that his trusty steeds will be careful and save his life.

An Amazon enters and remarks how turbulent the sea is becoming although the day is sunny and mild. Artemis and the Amazon watch Hippolytus, as spectators they recount the ensuing action to the audience, as his steeds, frightened by the rushing of the sea, break from their regular pace. Although Hippolytus reins them well, a pyramid of foam leaps up from the sea with glaring eyes and monstrous features that burst forth flame across his path. As it hurls itself before him, the horses become unmanageable so that his chariot is overturned and dashed to splinters. Artemis declares that she must go to Hippolytus and hastily departs with the Amazon.

With his followers Theseus enters, hoping that he is not too late to save his innocent son, and asking Poseidon to annul his curse. Declaring that he was the victim of a

wicked deceit, Theseus wants to retract his petition to Poseidon so that his guiltless son will live.

Artemis and others enter bearing Hippolytus. Artemis presents the disfigured, but alive body to Theseus "as you wished". Theseus rents Hell's curses on the tongue which falsely accused his beloved son. Realizing that Hippolytus still breathes, he begs his son to live so that he can take care of his wounds, and remove the slander from his reputation. When Theseus asks Hippolytus' forgiveness for ordering his undeserved death, the youth asks him only to remember that he always loved him. He attempts to comfort his grief-stricken father by reminding him that he has other children who are also of Theseus' blood. As Hippolytus' strength wanes, Artemis reveals herself to him as the goddess whom he honored. Blissfully recognizing her, he dies.

The play closes with Artemis' eulogy of her beloved devotee:

"In fair Elysian fields
 Dream without sorrow of the things that were --
 Beneath thy shadowy steps shall lilies spring,
 While the pure-hearted, fleeting ere their time,
 Shall joy to take their virgin rest with thee."⁴⁵

⁴⁵Ibid., p. 128.

CHAPTER VI

Hippolytus Temporizes - Hilda Doolittle Aldington

Another American authoress, Mrs. Hilda Doolittle Aldington, used the Hippolytus legend in her drama Hippolytus Temporizes in 1927. She wrote her play in her characteristic delicately-crisp free verse which has quality and is very well done in many sections. As far as I can ascertain, the play was never produced. It may be classified as a closet drama since it lacks dramatic possibilities and was evidently written for the sheer beauty of the lyrics. The stage directions are more complete than in the previous plays, but the long monologues and elaborate language make the play unsuitable for effective drama. A student of the classics, Mrs. Aldington has attempted to imitate the classical unities and includes many mythological inferences and allusions in her writing which abounds in metaphors.

Mrs. Aldington wrote her play during the Renaissance, the rebirth of the spirit of truth and beauty, in American poetry. The twentieth century technique of purely aesthetic perception was hers, and to her beauty was set apart. She was fascinated by Greek culture. The flawless purity of Greek models was a perpetual source of inspiration to her. Her work reveals her saturation with Greek mythology. She

employs free verse with a classical restraint. Amy Lowell says of her style:

"Writing in a highly and most carefully wrought vers libre, "H.D." 's poems achieve a beauty of cadence which has been surpassed by no other vers libriste."46

H. P. Collins says of her translations:

"The only notable critic whom I have read on these translations is Mr. T. S. Eliot; in whose opinion H. D.'s choruses are 'much nearer to both Greek and English' than those of the best known English translator."47

H. D. has often been termed the best of the Imagist poets, whose rules are:

"1. To use the language of common speech, but to employ always the exact word, not the nearly-exact, nor the merely decorative word.

2. To create new rhythms - as the expression of new moods - and not to copy old rhythms, which merely echo old moods. We do not insist upon "free verse" as the only method of writing poetry. We fight for it as for a principle of liberty. We believe that the individuality of a poet may often be better expressed in free verse than in conventional forms. In poetry a new cadence means a new idea.

3. To allow absolute freedom in the choice of subject. It is not good art to write badly of aeroplanes and automobiles, nor is it necessarily bad art to write well about the past. We believe passionately in the artistic value of modern life, but we wish to point out that there is nothing so uninspiring nor so old-fashioned as an aeroplane of the year 1911.

4. To present an image (hence the name: "Imagist"). We are not a school of painters, but we believe that poetry should render particulars exactly and not deal in vague generalities, however magnificent and sonorous. It is for this reason that we oppose the cosmic poet, who seems to us to shirk the real

⁴⁶Lowell, Amy, Tendencies in Modern American Poetry, p. 256.

⁴⁷Collins, H. P., Modern Poetry, p. 168.

difficulties of his art.

5. To produce poetry that is hard and clear, never blurred nor indefinite.

6. Finally, most of us believe that concentration is of the very essence of poetry."⁴⁸

Very remote from the original legend, the plot revolves about a contest of power among the Olympian deities, and Phaedra's trickery. Mrs. Aldington's characters are subordinated to this battle of wills so that no character is strongly portrayed or well-drawn. She introduces a new character in Hyperides, a courtier of Athens, who has a very minor part in acting friendly to Hippoclytus by attempting to reason with the youth and make him see the truth. She also has a new character in the Boy from a wrecked Cyprian vessel who meets Hippolytus upon the shore and lauds his "lady" as the prince praises Artemis. He serves Hippolytus in a minor fashion and laments the youth's death. The drama could well do without him. Theseus is not in the cast at all. We merely find him mentioned in the play by Phaedra as "dull" and by Hippolytus as "indolent" whose only great deed was begetting him.

As in Euripides' play we find Phaedra's nurse in the cast, but Mrs. Aldington has given her a minor role with no part in the action of the drama whatsoever. The author substitutes "Myrrhina" serving lady to Phaedra" as accompanying the Queen and her bosom confidante who offers good advice to Phaedra in vain. Of all the confidantes of

⁴⁸Lowell, Amy, op. cit., p. 239-240.

the Queen, Mrs. Aldington has portrayed her as more admirable, although less strongly and distinctly characterized than the previous ones. Myrrhina attempts to dissuade Phaedra from stooping to her base trickery. Later she tells the Boy that the Queen's statements are false when the latter pretends she is the goddess, Artemis. She prays to Artemis to avert the evil.

Of all the Phaedras, Mrs. Aldington's is the lowest in tricking Hippolytus to spend the night with her in the pretense that she is his beloved goddess. In the previous dramas, the Phaedras, regardless of their corruption and intensity of their passions, were tormented by their conscience for their desires alone. This low specimen of womanhood does not quake even at the deed. From the little she reveals in the drama, her suicide may be due to her boredom with her dull husband as there is no indication that she regrets her wrong-doing or is ashamed of it.

Of all the characters in this drama, Hippolytus is the most disappointing. By having Hippolytus temporize, Mrs. Aldington seems to ridicule all the high ideals the original youth represented. We cannot admire the weak prince who constantly wanders about in a daze searching fanatically for his goddess. Euripides' manly, sport-loving, honest youth roamed the forest in the hunt, worshipping Artemis as a goddess. Mrs. Aldington's insipid youth searches in a stupefied manner for Artemis as a mortal whom

he desires. His descriptions of her are not idealistic, but often sensual which detract from the dignity of a divinity. Whether or not his senses were dulled by the appearance of the goddess to him, it seems incredible and stupid on his part not to recognize his stepmother in the brightly-lighted tent. This Hippolytus has lost all of the personality and manly characteristics of the original youth - the remaining similarity being in name, ancestry, and rank.

In my opinion, the entire play falls short of good drama and is the poorest of the plays included in this study. The author seems to have inserted some lyrics for the sake of their beauty, even though they add nothing to the play, but rather detract from its coherence. The play lacks good characterization, dramatic appeal, and the shoddy plot is shared between Phaedra's trickery and a battle of Olympian wills.

Mrs. Aldinton precedes her play with "The Argument" in which she recounts the familiar story of the Hippolytus legend and Phaedra's unrequited passion. She reveals that in the second act of her play, Phaedra gains the passion of Hippolytus by a trick. She also informs us that the hero will die according to tradition, in a frenzied drive along the seacoast, and that the consequence of his death to two of the Olympians is set forth in the final act of her tragedy.

Act I opens upon a wild gorge below Troezen. The

goddess, Artemis, in a long monologue discloses that she has a hidden haven there from all mortals with their intolerable prayer, where no priest can mar her ease. She reveals that she will plot with earth to efface all Greek cities with wild arbutus and luminous trees.

Hippolytus enters, stumbling forward in the dim light. Apparently he does not see the goddess, but calls her, asking where she is hiding, praising the mistress of the sea in various ways. Artemis complains that again she is bothered by intolerable prayer. Hippolytus, in long lauding speeches, tells the goddess how he has searched for her far and wide for a long time. When the goddess finally appears to him, he tells her of his complete worship of her, and of how each time he finds her, he erects a shrine to her in that woodland spot. When Artemis inquires what he seeks, he replies that he seeks her. Artemis tells him that he is wasting his life "shadowing" her when he should be concerned with his civic duties. When she informs him that a rumor of Athen's queen and king have reached her ears, Hippolytus bemoans the fate of his captured father. The goddess warns him

"Beware the capturer

Who may snare another."⁴⁹

The hurt Hippolytus asks his beloved goddess if she thinks

⁴⁹Hilda Doolittle Aldington, Hippolytus Temporizes, p. 10.

that he shares his chastity and thoughts with her (presumably Venus) when he so ardently worships her by praying to her and decorating her altars daily. Artemis replies that, although she wishes to escape all men's songs and prayers, Hippolytus traps and tricks her by constantly following her. When she asks what lure is driving him to this, he replies:

"The lure of frenzied feet,
of webbed gold hair --"⁵⁰

When she admonishes him that she is not mortal, he replies that he is blind to that idea. Artemis informs him that his charms have attracted Phaedra to him and invoked her lust for him, and that the Queen will suffer no rivals.

Voices in the distance sing that love can never come to them who died young long ago. Artemis tells Hippolytus that the voices are those of her maidens who are angry because she is conversing with a mortal. The youth retorts that he is not a mortal and begs her to share her solitude with him. Artemis answers that only women share her loneliest retreats. He suggests that their common love for his dead mother, Hippolyta, bind them together, and since his Amazon mother belonged to Artemis, he does also. When he calls the goddess "Mother", she replies that he is not her child, but the son of Theseus, King of Athens. If she cherished

⁵⁰Ibid., p. 13.

Hippolytus and lead him away from his ruling duties as a prince, Zeus and the other gods would be angry with her. When voices are heard in the forest, the goddess disappears in a white mist which suddenly envelops the woodland. Hippolytus wanders about as if struck blind. Hyperides, a courtier of Athens, enters seeking Hippolytus. In a monologue he bewails the power of religion which is admirable in its place, but detrimental when carried to extremes as in the case of Hippolytus, who infatuated with a goddess, continually wanders in the forest seeking her.

Hippolytus appears in a daze and does not recognize Hyperides when he first speaks to him. He chides the prince for lurking in the forest when he should be sharing power and his proper station in life. He tells Hippolytus that with his taut, stiffened frame and fixed eyes, he is like a victim of some evil charm. When he asks the prince to return to Athens with him, Hippolytus tells him that he hates him with his suave courtier-like face and that Theseus and Athens make him sick.

When Hyperides tells the prince that his father Theseus commands him to return, Hippolytus orders him to tell Theseus that he is seeking his mother, long since forgotten. The courtier tries to entice him to return home to the palace, attractively describing its beauty with groves and fountains. Hippolytus refutes the idea of returning to the Queen with her trickery and magic, the Queen of a weakling

King. He commands Hyperides to tell his father that he has jeered at him since the only noteworthy deed he ever actually performed was to beget him. The members of the band of hunters gradually enter and group themselves around Hippolytus and Hyperides. The latter tells them that Hippolytus still rages and the prince seems to augment the statement as he cries

"O wonder

of wild, wild feet

O listening of bright hair --"51

A boy from a wrecked Cybrian vessel steps forward to ask "where?" Hippolytus replies that she is here, there, and nowhere as she approaches with brilliance and then suddenly disappears again. When Hyperides tells Hippolytus that he displays a curious humor, the latter calls him a foolish tool of indolent Theseus and orders him to leave as he is not worthy to kneel on the white sand and enjoy that wonderful land.

The boy asks Hippolytus what has driven him mad, and tells him that his eyes are similar to those of the drowning men lost on his ship. Hyperides brings in a band of musicians who sing as if before an imaginary altar. Hippolytus commends them to cease as no rhythm can interpret that of the white feet of his goddess. When Hyperides

⁵¹Ibid., p. 33.

exalts the beauty of song, Hippolytus berates it as incapable of absorbing emotions. He charges Hyperides with inability to sense true beauty and calls him a hypocrite attempting to pacify an insane prince. He then berates the courtier as a flattering tool of impotent Theseus. Again in vain Hyperides attempts to persuade the youth to return home with him. Hippolytus commands him to tell Theseus that he orders a statue to be erected in that lonely spot to the goddess. With the huntsmen, Hyperides and the musicians depart to do his bidding. The boy tells the prince that he remained with him because he could not leave him with his frenzied eyes and sudden feverish trembling. When Hippolytus complains of his weariness, the boy persuades him to rest on his cloak which he has spread upon the sand.

Hippolytus flings himself face downward upon the cloak, claiming that he hears the goddess' voice and clasps her luminous knees. The boy says that Hippolytus' lady is like his at home. They each add attributes to their lady's beauty and compare her breath to white violets. The praises are so similar that it seems as if they both laud the same "lady" as the boy describes her crown as plaited myrtle which is Artemis' symbol. Drowsily Hippolytus asks the boy to sing and pray that the goddess will come there. The boy replies that he will as he watches and waits for her. As Hippolytus falls asleep, the voices of Artemis' maidens are heard singing in the distance.

Act II opens in the evening on the same strip of sea-coast where the statue of Artemis has been erected. Phaedra is found with Myrrhina, her serving-lady. In a long monologue the Queen reveals how she hates Greece and its constant rituals and prayers to the gods. When Myrrhina reminds her of her loving husband, she calls him a "dull King" and says she knows what love might have been. When the serving-lady suggests that they escape to Phaedra's homeland, beautiful, sunny Crete, the latter replies that Crete or no other place holds any attraction for her since she became inflamed with love for Hippolytus.

Phaedra's nurse enters to announce that the King has granted the Queen's request to erect a tent of cedarwood overhung with canopies in that spot, and to spend the night there. Phaedra orders the nurse to decorate the tent with the most elaborate furnishings from the palace and to bring the band of singing girls to stand about her in the tent. The nurse departs to execute her commands. When Myrrhina prays to Artemis to protect her Queen there, Phaedra prays to Aphrodite, the goddess of love, revealing that she intends to betray Theseus, saying that she would obtain pleasure from murdering him.

The Boy enters, singing praises of the lady's rare, still beauty. Phaedra pretends to him that she is the goddess, Artemis. Myrrhina attempts to persuade her against this deception and calls her false statements lies. As

Phaedra tells the Boy that Myrrhina maligns her, and that she is actually Artemis. Myrrhina prays to the statue of Artemis to come soon to avert the evil being plotted at her shrine. Still pretending to be Artemis, Phaedra orders the Boy to tell his prince Hippolytus that she, Artemis, after long abstaining from love, longs for him and is waiting to mate with him. Dressed like the goddess, Phaedra impresses the Boy that she is really Artemis. She bids him to have Hippolytus keep their meeting-place secret as it may mean death. As the Boy departs to carry her message to his prince, she prays to Aphrodite.

A lapse of time is indicated by darkness or curtain. As Myrrhina prays to the statue of Artemis, the goddess' maidens appear as ghosts about the statue and chant their song, claiming that they have conjured the goddess back. When the ghosts fade away, Phaedra enters from the tent, telling Myrrhina that "it was sweet". The latter attempts to persuade the Queen to return to the palace to the King. Phaedra replies that her King is here and that she has pledged the spot to fair Aphrodite.

Hippolytus enters from the tent, addressing the statue as his goddess. Upon seeing Phaedra, he asks her what she is doing there. When she replies that like him, she has come to pray, he accuses her of going to the goddess' sanctity to spy. When Phaedra tells him that she loves him more than before, he scoffs at her and tells her that he

lay last night with Artemis. Myrrhina interrupts Phaedra to prevent her from revealing that it was she with whom he spent the night. When the youth says that he knows his goddess is gone and he will never again meet her in the flesh, Phaedra replies that he could feel her shape and find her love in someone else's arms. Hippolytus says that Phaedra is worn out and mad and tells her to go to the King. The Queen retorts that she and Aphrodite have won the contest for a prince - with death. She raves that Artemis appears to her with mocking eyes. Myrrhina begs her to return to the castle, but she replies that she will remain there forever. Before entering the tent she asks the prince to pray for her. As dawn approaches, Hippolytus prays to his goddess.

A lapse of time is indicated by darkness or curtain. The tent has been removed and Hyperides enters. When he asks Hippolytus what he is doing there, he responds that he is praying for Phaedra, who is ill in the tent. Hyperides informs him that the Queen is dead and that her corpse has been carried back to the castle. When Hippolytus tells Hyperides that he rested with his fair lady there in a bright tent built up of fragrant cedar, he glances towards the tent. Seeing it gone, he concludes that it must have been a dream. Hyperides informs him that last night Phaedra had such a tent erected there, all decorated with myrtle, and how her girls sang there. When Hyperides tells

Hippolytus of how Phaedra tricked him into spending the night with her, Hippolytus will not believe that it was not the goddess in the tent. Then Hyperides reports to him that Phaedra has hanged herself in the tent. Still insisting that it was his goddess with whom he slept, Hippolytus orders his chariot and steeds so that he can drive along the shore to still his ecstatic gladness, lest he reveal his night with the goddess to the Athenians.

Act III opens on the same strip of seacoast. Calling Artemis constantly, Hippolytus lies where he has been flung from his chariot at the base of the statue. Helios enters and prays to the goddess, as lover and help of all nature, to assist and bless the injured, fever-stricken youth. When Artemis finally appears, Helios upbraids her for being so cold and heartless to ignore the dying prince. The goddess replies that he should not judge her so rashly. Hippolytus recognizes his goddess and begs her for a kiss. As he describes his intoxicant ecstasy with her in that spot, she declares that he fouled and blasphemed her holy shrine so that her spirit has gone from there forever.

The Boy enters, and finding his prince dead, sings his praises. Artemis retorts that his soul and body are broken, defamed, and disgraced. Again the Boy lauds Hippolytus and says that he has a fair place in infinity. When Artemis states that Hippolytus has no place where any god may come, Helios tells her that she is less strong than love. Both

he and the goddess lament fate and the evil deed. The Boy departs to bring aid to Hippolytus from the Troezians. Hippolytus stands and wishes to have the entire world worship Artemis in this spot. As he falls forward, Artemis gives him no aid. Her maidens come, chanting their chorus, to seek the soul of Hippolytus, but Helios, deeming it unjust for such a fair young person to go so soon, bids them depart. Artemis claims that the youth is dead, but Helios, declaring himself powerful Paeon, says that death must pause when he wills. He says that he and Artemis must stand impotent, like speechless slaves, doing nothing while Death has insulted their divinity and Love has stolen. They exert their power to revivify Hippolytus who finally stirs. Artemis kneels supporting him. He remarks that her dress has changed, and that when Death came, he was not afraid because she came, took him up and held him close as they soared up like a cloud and fell far from this coast. Hippolytus' enraptured mind extols Love and he says that no beauty in nature exists without Love's altar as he reminisces how she found shelter in his arms. He says that rose-laurel trees throw purple shadows in Cyprus. Artemis laments that Love has stolen him from them, as the goddess he was describing was Aphrodite. When the youth requests a kiss from the goddess, Artemis kisses him sadly and tells Helios to let him return to death.

The Boy returns with Hyperides and the huntsmen who

depart with the body of Hippolytus.

Helios says his farewell to Artemis:

"Again I fail
 Again I fail to prove my absolute,
 my passionate love for her
 who walks as star-dust,
 Phosphoros
 blown at night
 across high perilous frontiers
 of the north,
 who treads as sea-foam
 even the perilous seas,
 splendor of Erymanthus and its light,
 O queen of Delos,
 queen of my high towers
 even at Delphi,
 hail and farewell."⁵²

Artemis states that she has heard the intolerable rhythm and sound of prayer and must hide where no mortals and priests will mar her ease. She says someone will come after she leaves each place and set an altar up, but that she will have gone further away to some loftier, untrodden spot where she will be at ease and wait.

"I will engage in thought and plot with earth
 how we may best efface from Elaea
 and all stony Peloponnese,
 from wild Arcadia,
 from the Isthmian straits,
 from Thrace and Locrian hills
 (as isles are sunk in overwhelming seas)
 all Grecian cities
 with the wild arbutus
 and the luminous trees."⁵³

⁵²Ibid., pp. 136-137.

⁵³Ibid., pp. 138-139.

Conclusion

Of the known dramas on the Hippolytus legend I have reviewed the six to which I have had access, considering them chronologically. Ranging from 428 B.C. to 1927 A.D. they have proved a very stimulating study in drama. After studying the various dramas, I chose the original, that of Euripides, as the best, and have almost used it as a standard in reviewing and judging the later dramas.

Euripides' drama, written in 428 B.C. stands pre-eminent among them all in dramatic intensity and lyric qualities. Writing of his own people, his tone and setting are truly Attic. His drama has subtlety and sincerity with clear, simple, direct language. He achieved the foremost aim of Greek rhetoric, clarity. His characters are well-drawn and all convincingly Greek in temperament. His drama, of character and fate, is structurally well-rounded and moves smoothly to a logical conclusion.

Seneca, the Latin author, wrote his version of the legend in 56 A.D. He conformed to the strict rhetorical standards of his age, losing the natural simplicity of the Greek model. Remote from the clarity and directness of Euripides we find a florid, rhetorical style with long, didactic speeches, a tendency to philosophize, frequent epigrams, elaborate monologue, broad description, intro-

spection, and reflection, all of which detract from the intensity of the drama. He divided the drama into five formal acts. Apart from his style, his main deviations from Euripides' version is that he shifts the emphasis from a character play to the female protagonist. He introduces the element of human will in contrast to fate alone as we find in Euripides' drama. Except for these deviations his play is a direct imitation of the Greek.

The drama of the French author, Racine, appeared in 1676. His study of the Greek tragedians led him to submit willingly to the rigor and simplicity of form which were the fundamental marks of the classical ideal. His fluent and often beautiful verse yields so completely to the Neo-classical rules that it sometimes lacks life and vigor. He used the dramas of Euripides and Seneca as direct models. It is in his treatment of characters that he differed most from his predecessors. He subordinates everything in his drama to the character of Phaedra. Disregarding the element of fate, he depicts her as driven by almost uncontrollable human passion. However, he succeeded brilliantly in portraying a strong, dynamic character in his unforgettable Phaedra. He introduced a love intrigue to conform to the Neo-classical requirements of the French literature of his age. His drama is exceptionally effective from the standpoint of staging. He sought for intensity of dramatic effect and achieved it by producing a truly great drama.

The English author, Edmund Smith, wrote his version of the legend in a tragedy in 1707. Although he imitated the Greek and Latin authors, he followed the French more closely because it was more popular in the Restoration period. His play is structurally well-rounded and finished, but dramatically it is neither convincing nor stirring. He imitated the classical rules too rigidly, making his drama pseudo-classic. His style and poetry are often beautiful, but the language is too polished and artificial for dialogue. The long speeches and exposition are definitely anti-climactic. His characters are mediocre with no Greek traits. Although he imitated the French model closely, he lost the strong characterization and dramatic intensity of Racine, and his tragedy verges on melodrama.

In 1851, Julia Ward Howe, an American, wrote a drama on the Hippolytus legend. She imitated the Latin and Greek models and kept close to the traditions surrounding the episode. She reverts to Euripides' idea of fate predominating over human will. Her drama is closest to the Greek model. Her characters, strongly and well portrayed are more Greek in temperament than those in the Latin, French, and English versions. Her language also is more akin to Euripides with its simplicity and directness. Her play is structurally well-rounded and has dramatic appeal.

Hilda Doolittle Aldington, another American author, wrote a drama on the Hippolytus legend in 1927. Her play

presents the greatest variation from the traditional legend and its conventional treatment. A student of the Latin and Greek, she used neither model for direct imitation. Her drama is extremely original with only slight proximity to the legend and only faint echoes of the Greek model. Her drama is saturated with Greek mythology. Her adherence to the Imagist theories of poetry hinders the coherence, sequence, and dramatic continuity of her play. The long monologues and elaborate language make the play unsuitable for effective drama. No character in the drama is clearly drawn and some are inconsistently drawn. In her play she employed the modern free verse with her characteristic classical restraint. Her concentration seems to be upon perfect, aesthetic poetry rather than upon a structurally rounded drama. She writes in a charming, delicate, lyrical style, and there is haunting beauty in her poetically aesthetic lines. Her poetry is beautiful, but there is little dramatic power in the play.

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Abstract

In making this study of the Hippolytus legend in drama I have endeavored to evaluate the plays included for their language, poetry, plot development, characterization, stage directions, and dramatic possibilities. The six plays employing the legend and available to me are of such varied time element that the works of their authors, influenced by the literary characteristics of their respective ages, have proved most interesting. In fact the main deviations from the original legend, plot, style, and presentation seem to result from the demands of the national and literary standards of the age in which the authors wrote their dramas. In comparing and contrasting the various plays inspired by the legend, it is difficult to make defined generalizations which inevitably are the opinions of one person. Preparatory to this study I thought I fortified myself well by reading a variety of books on judging and reviewing drama in order to make my work objective. Regardless of my intent I now realize that I reflect the effect of the dramas on my ideals and preferences. So I submit my subjective conclusions with the statement, "In my opinion."

All the dramatists attempted to give their drama the Attic tone and setting. In my estimation, only Mrs. Howe has succeeded in this, with the exception of Euripides who wrote in the age and location. Ancient Greece is the setting

for all of the plays, although most of the authors have obeyed the literary standards of their age and nation to give us more color of their native land than of Attica. Most of the plays adhere to the historical legend and plot of Euripides, with some modifications. In the study I considered the plays chronologically, but here I shall reflect them from the most recent back to the original.

Hilda Doolittle Aldington's version is the poorest of the plays, and the most remote from the original of Euripides, not only in time, but in all the terms of evaluation of drama. The author departs from the conventional treatment of the play with stress upon the physical. Her unrhymed free verse with its adherence to imagism is a direct hindrance to coherence. This concentration on chiselled lyric beauty spoils the sequence and the smooth flow necessary to good drama. The play lacks dramatic power and one has to cultivate a taste for H.D.'s style to enjoy it even as a closet drama. The characterization is poor with no character clearly defined.

Mrs. Julia Ward Howe followed the traditions surrounding the legend closely in her drama. A careful student of the Greek, her language and characters coincide with the age and scene which she set for her play. The language is simple, direct, and natural. The only weakness I find is the movement which at times is slow. Of the plays considered, I rate Mrs. Howe's second best and am proud that an American

produced such an excellent work for a period and location so distant from her own.

Edmund Smith's tragedy is mediocre and verges on melodrama. The characters have no Greek traits and its artificial language and embellishments annihilates any proximity to the lofty, but simple Greek drama. To a lover of form, the play is a good closet drama. It is structurally rounded and finished, but dramatically neither convincing nor stirring.

Racine's drama of passion was definitely constructed for theatrical effect. In attaining this effect he lost the lofty beauty of the original. He modified the plot with intrigues of love to suit the literary tastes of his age. His drama is richest in suspense, close to melodrama, and yet has great dramatic possibilities. Interest is at high pitch from beginning to end. The characters lack Greek traits, but his Phaedra is dynamic, a choice acting part with a multitude of conflicting emotions. This is my third choice among the plays. Although greater in dramatic intensity, it lacks the natural poetic power of the original.

Seneca's drama, although closely patterned on Euripides' is a poor copy. Catering to the false taste of an artificial age, his elaborate language detracts from the simple beauty of Euripides' work. His play is mediocre and leans toward melodrama. He started the emphasis from Hippolytus to the heroine in the play until we find Racine subordinating

everything in the play to Phaedra. The play lacks dramatic effect and may be appreciated for its form as a closet drama.

Admiration for Euripides led me to study how other authors had treated the theme of my favorite of his plays. I can honestly say that I judged the dramas with an unprejudiced mind. I would be delighted to find a drama superior to his on the theme. In the scope available to me I found none equal to it. The contrast was greater than the comparison. In fact, the subsequent dramas fall so far short of Euripides' that I am left with a greater and deeper appreciation of the latter, and a hunger to return to his refreshing works with their true beauty again and again. His drama is one of fate and character. His Phaedra is the most noble, too modest to utter her feelings to an innocent youth. This delicacy was lost upon Seneca and Racine, who degrade her to be her own advocate. His dialogue is direct, unrestrained, and natural. There are no loose ends, as the drama moves rapidly and smoothly to a logical conclusion. From the standpoint of beautiful poetry, dynamic, artistic characterization, and simple powerful drama, his work is unsurpassed by any of the other plays on the theme.

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